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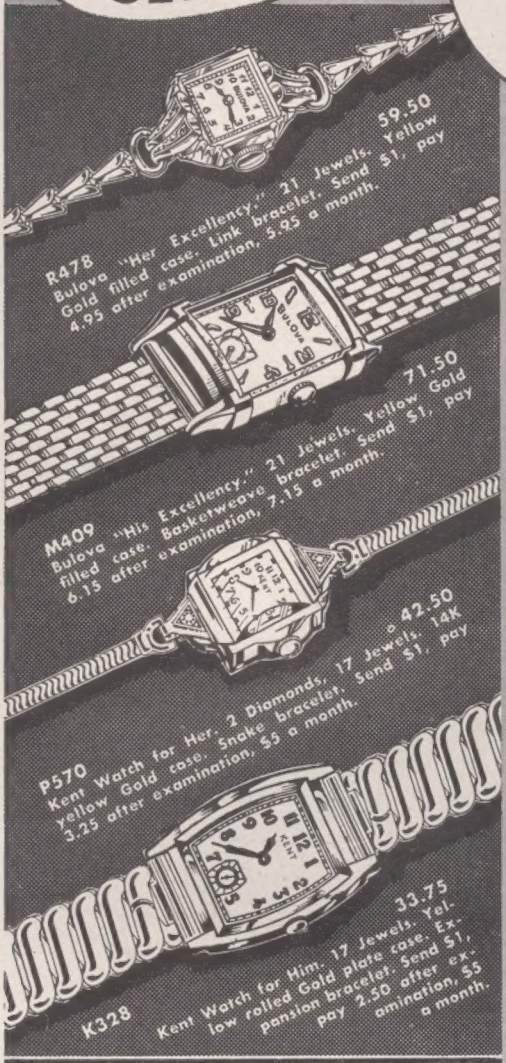

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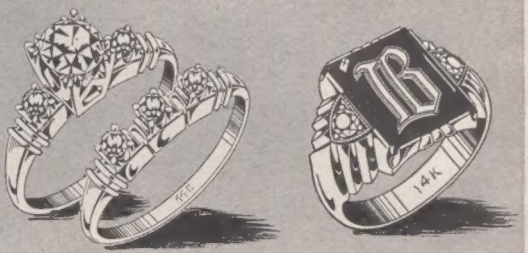

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Age.....

APRIL ISSUE ON SALE MARCH 11TH

Adventure

(Registered U. S. Patent Office)

March, 1949 Vol. 120, No. 5

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Cover painted for Adventure *by Malvin Singer*

Kendall W. Goodwyn, Editor

Any resemblance between any character appearing in fictional matter, and any person, living or dead, is entirely coincidental and unintentional.

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NOTE: We offer this department to readers who wish to get in touch again with friends or acquaintances separated by years or chance. Give your own name and full address. Please notify *Adventure* immediately should you establish contact with the person you are seeking. Space permitting, each inquiry addressed to *Lost Trails* will be run in three consecutive issues. Requests by and concerning women are declined as not considered effective in a magazine published for men. *Adventure* also will decline any notice that may not seem a sincere effort to recover an old friendship, or that may not seem suitable to the editors for any other reason. No charge is made for publication of notices.

I would like to hear from anyone having information on present address of Fred Matheny, formerly of U. S. Army. When last heard from he was living with a sister in West Virginia. Please write Thomas J. Mulhern, 336 E. 166 St., Bronx, New York.

Clarence J. Carlton, 114 N. Sanchez St., Ocala, Fla., seeks whereabouts of his son Clarence J. Carlton, Jr. Last heard from in Boston, Mass., 1941.

Anybody knowing the whereabouts of a man known as Indian Shorty who lives in or around Cottonwpod, Calif., please contact Stanley E. Ehrman, 1042 Daisy Ave., Long Beach, Calif.

I would like to locate Edward McMenamin, once known as Collins in the fight ring. He is about 5'6", red hair, and was last heard of in Baltimore and Pittsburgh. Please write R. Essick, 6629 S. Ashland Ave., Chicago, Ill.

Would be pleased to contact Charles J. Arch. Worked with him at Indio, Calif., during the latter part of World War I. Write E. H. Douglas, 533 Towne Ave., Los Angeles, Calif.

I would appreciate any information about R. S. Saulter. Has been in Emporia, Kansas, and worked in Frisco and Oakland, Calif. Contact Harry Johnson, Jr., Oneals, Calif.

Would like any information about Oscar S. Moss, last heard of in Beaumont, Texas. He is 5'6" tall, brown hair and eyes, ruddy complexion. Please contact L. C. Cunningham, Rt. 2, Box 39, Richmond, Texas.

I would like to find Alvin G. Grate, native of Missouri. If living, he is about sixty-five years old. Served with me in Co. G, First Arizona Infantry on the Mexican border in '16 and '17. He was last heard of in Feather River Country of California, 1922. Please write Capt. Emmett DeHoff, 27th Installations Sqdn., Kearney Air Force Base, Kearney, Neb.

(Continued on page 8)

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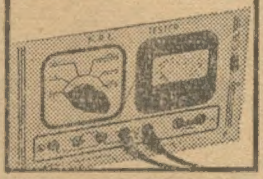

YOU TEST Radio Circuits like this built with parts I send. Build special circuits; learn how to locate and repair circuit defects.

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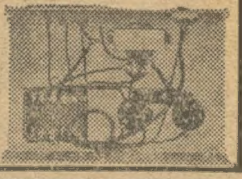

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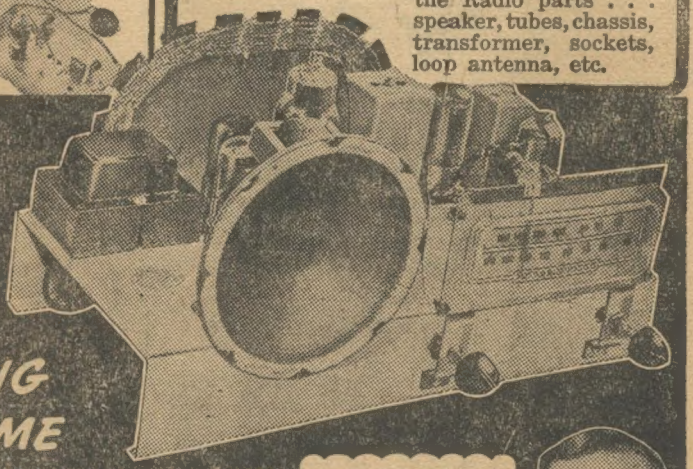

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The ROSICRUCIANS

San Jose (AMORC) California

(Continued from page 6)

I would appreciate contacting any of the following men, Charles Barton, John Martin, Alfred Werner, Frank Hittinger, or any other men who served in the 8th Co., CAC Coast Defense of Cristobal; also James Lipscomb, Fred Sweitzer, John Clark, Josef Dutka, Adolph Cole, who served in the 31st Co., CAC Fort Caswell, North Carolina. Please write to A. Trittinger, 1374 Amar St., San Pedro, California.

Please locate my brother, Harley Raymond Beehler, tall, fair complexion, about 35 or 40. Contact Gerald Beehler, 516 E. Dutton St., Kalamazoo, Mich.

Owen Franklin Alvey has been sought by his son, Anthony G. Alvey, for many years. His description is as follows: Born October 7, 1882, in Evansville, Indiana. About 5 ft. 9 in. tall, slim build, used to have coal black hair, brown eyes (artificial left eye), and for many years was a baker by trade, working in the west and southwest of the U.S. Alvey, Sr., was musically inclined and played a mandolin and guitar. He had a very good tenor voice. Please send any information of his whereabouts to A. G. Alvey, Chief Radioman, USS Noriss, (DD-859), c/o Fleet Post Office, San Francisco, Calif.

I would like to get in touch with M/Sgt Laurence Allan Cross, R.A. 6944209. He is 5'11", weighs about 140 lbs., has a ruddy complexion, thick, light brown hair, and his middle right finger is deformed on the end. He did have a blond mustache. Please write to D. E. Cross, 2225 Callow Ave., Baltimore, Md.

I would like to locate Dock Gainy. The last known address was 213 A Princeton St., Liberty Homes, North Charleston, S. C. He is now believed to be on a farm not far from Charleston. Please write Joseph LeRoy Landry, P. O. Box 111, Napoleonville, La.

Anyone knowing the whereabouts of Arthur R. Robbins, 37 years old, recently in the U.S. Army, and who was last heard from December 1947, in Arlington, Virginia, please write Walter J. Kennedy, P.O. Box 869, St. John's, Newfoundland. Robbins' forte is music and at one time he played guitar with Eddie Arnold.

I wish to gather any information about my old buddy, Walter G. Chandler, nicknamed "Cow-Creek." He was born in Cow Creek, Florida, is about 57 years old, 5'6", black hair and eyes. Served two hitches in the 160th C.A.C., mostly at Fort Stevens, Ore. Last heard of at Camp Pike, Ark., 1918-1919. He once belonged to the Knights of Pythias. Contact M. C. Breckinridge, 113-N. Wilson Way, Stockton, Calif.

I would like to locate Thomas A. Jones, last heard of in Gunnison, Colorado, in 1934. He lived in Gary, Indiana, in 1933 and part of '34. He was a body and fender man and worked for Sharps Garage in Indiana and Hartman's Garage in Montrose, Colo. Please get in touch with D. G. Johnson, 735 Custer Ave., Billings, Mont.

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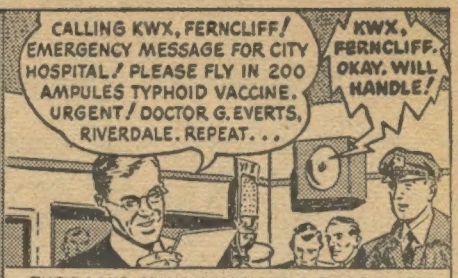
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KWX, FERNCLIFF. OKAY. WILL HANDLE!

THEIR LAND COMMUNICATIONS CUT AND WATER SUPPLY CONTAMINATED BY FLOODS, RIVERDALE'S CITIZENS ARE UNDERGOING MASS INOCULATION, BUT YOUNG DOCTOR EVERT'S SERUM SUPPLY IS RUNNING LOW AND...

ME ON YOUR NEWSCAST? GOSH, I WAS JUST GOING HOME AND CLEAN UP
DO IT AT THE STUDIO. NOW TO FIND THAT SERUM PILOT
WAIT 'TILL THE DOCTOR FINDS OUT IT'S ME!

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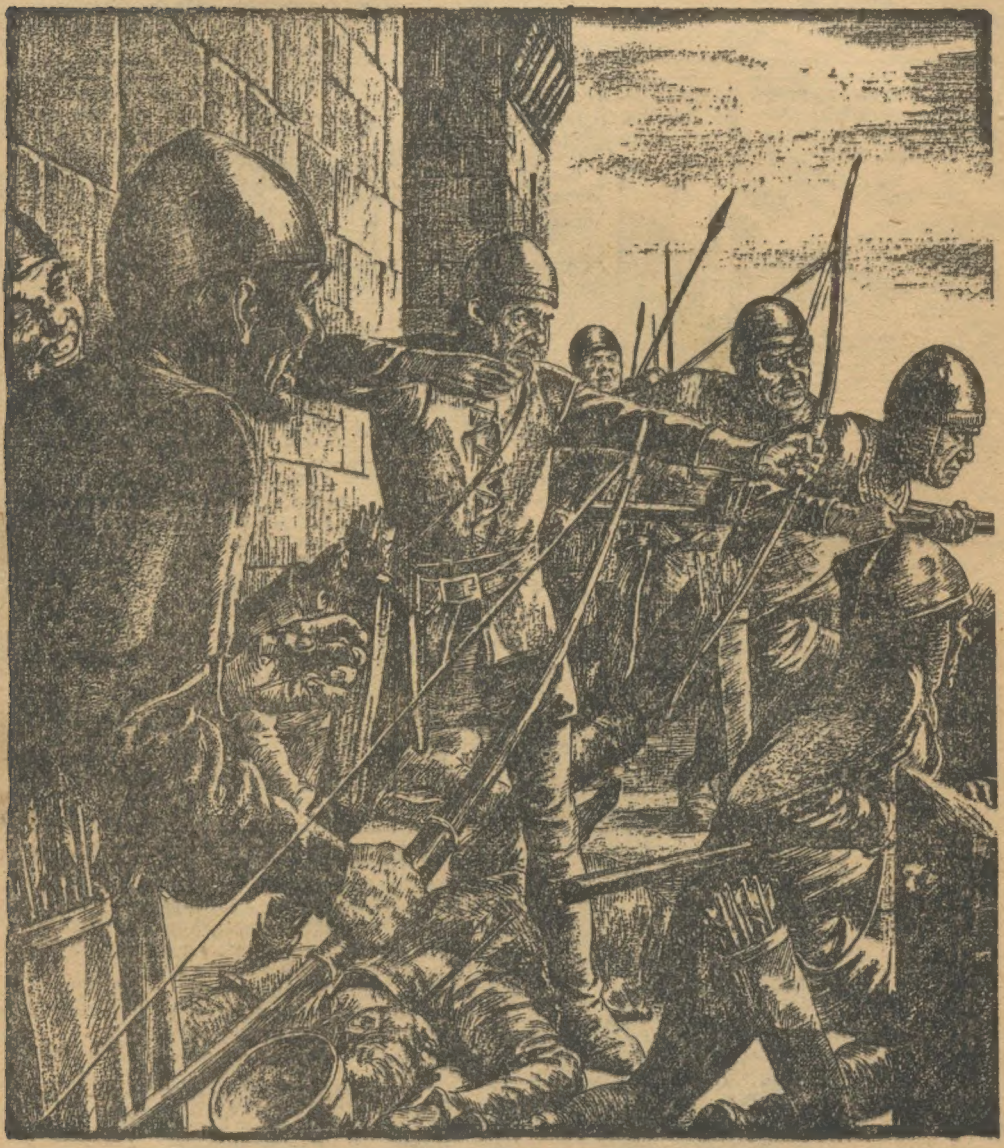

With their spears, the archers shoved the screaming mass of men and timber back into the ditch.

By FREDERICK WILKINS

IN THE chronicles of the Kings it was a year of peace, but Adam Cleves was no king, and his men must eat. If matters went well there would be food for all, as soon as the question of camp ownership was settled.

"Oh, pray they have meat," whispered little Fletcher.

Adam hushed the clerk with a whispered curse and fitted an arrow to his bowstring; there was no sign from the opposite side of the camp. Night was almost upon them, and the shadows in the trees became now darker and darker.

Very slowly one of the men by the nearest fire stood up, then fell forward into the burning pile; an arrow seemed to grow from his back; the feathering burning in a bright puff of flame.

"Damn some iron-head!" grunted Adam. "I hope they are ready," and he sped his shaft at the man's companion.

Some of the Genoese crossbowmen by the wagons cried an alarm and began hauling their weapons from the wagon beds; a man tipped over a stand of bills

ILLUSTRATED BY L. STERNE STEVENS

in his hurry to reach a weapon. Turning, he was shot completely through, an arrow sticking out a hand's span from his kidneys.

It was almost dark now, and Adam stayed behind his tree and played safe; Fletcher was babbling excitedly nearby, as he always did in a fight, and the bulk of his second in command, Jonathan, was half seen from the corner of his eye.

A crossbow bolt shattered against the tree, and Jonathan stood up. "Damme, Adam, he was shooting at me!"

Drawing his bowstring to his ear, Jonathan dropped a man near the fire. Adam could see that the Genoese were being hit from all sides; outlined by their cook fires, they made excellent targets for the hidden archers, without ever getting a clear shot in return. Complete darkness hid everything in the trees, but the clearing was well lighted by several campfires.

There was an occasional cry in Italian, but more and more English voices were shouting from the darkness; his men were calling to one another, shouting warnings as the remaining Genoese tried to slip away in the night.

The whole thing had lasted barely the amount of sand in a glass one could hold in the palm.

Blowing his horn, Adam began assembling his men. Jonathan was busily at work with a knife, assisted by several men, and soon all the wounded Genoese were out of their misery. Another group began securing the mules and horses, half mad with fright over the noise and the fire, for one of the wagons was ablaze, and embers had started the grass.

"Hurry with the wagon," commanded Adam, "there's gold there, I wager."

At this, half a dozen men rushed in the fire and a fight began.

"Damn you all!" yelled Adam and kicked one man on his behind and slapped another aside. "Must you always fight like fools! Obey orders. Put out the fire!"

Jonathan took a few men and posted guards over the kettles of food prepared by the previous occupants of the campsite. In a short time a dozen prisoners had been trussed to trees and forgotten; the dead had been hauled away, the fires piled high, and the site cleaned up. The company were eating their first good meal in two days.

Each twenty had their own mess, and there was one for Adam, Jonathan and old Fletcher, the scribe who kept the records and acted as adviser and took notes on long parchment rolls for the epic he was going to write if ever he saw Oxford again, which he rather doubted.

"It was rare luck coming on the mounted man this afternoon."

"God's work, I wager," replied Fletcher, "otherwise we would be hungry this night. Not only are we not hungry, but rich."

"I want some good men standing guard tonight," instructed Adam. "These Londoners would steal from their own mothers, and this is too fine a bit to suffer."

"I'll attend to it," promised Jonathan. "Dear Father, what meat!" He squatted on his haunches and chewed on a leg of mutton.

DETERMINED not to be taken as had the Genoese, Adam had his guards out in the woods all night, relieving them every glass. The men slept soundly, and there was nothing to make one believe that there was anyone else in this part of France.

When morning came the camp began to take on the appearance of cheer, for the bodies were well within the woods and out of sight.

"Jonathan, take a score of lads and strip the corpses. You go, Fletcher, and keep tally, so that a fair division can be made."

The majority of the Genoese had taken off their helmets and body armor the night before, thinking no one was about; this was still within the camp and had only to be counted and divided.

"No wonder they can't fight," muttered Adam. "It's not just that their weapon is poor, they burden themselves with useless armor."

Still, he permitted his men to exchange their helmets for the better Genoese caps scattered over the ground and in the wagons. Some found mail shirts that fit, but Adam would not let them

use the metal breastplates, as he considered them too heavy.

"Spearmen, maybe, but not archers. A good jerkin, even mail, an iron hat, and your bow, that's all you need."

One of the prisoners began crying for water, and an archer came over to Adam and said that the man wanted to talk with their leader.

"I would like a few words with him, at that," decided Adam. "What are these scum doing down here?"

The man only wanted water, and they had to wait until Fletcher came back to translate; a certain amount of torture applied to the man's limbs brought out a story.

"He says that they were going to Sir-something-or-other at Chateau Martel some ten leagues from here."

"If it were not for the French, the Genoese would starve," said Jonathan.

"And they had offers from another Count, but took service with the one in the castle, since it is rumored he has a great treasure hidden there."

"Going to rob him, I wager," approved Jonathan.

"Scoundrels, all of them," said Adam indignantly. "Thank God we came along when we did—*we* can rob him."

This man knew nothing more, which was unfortunate for him, but one of the others was a form of leader among the Genoese and talked freely to escape torture.

"Their leader was a great man," Fletcher translated. "He had a magic weapon, but what it was none of the men knew, and he never said, but he was going to save the people in the castle."

"Did you find anything that is like what he is talking about?"

"Nothing, Adam. There are some wondrous Cologne swords and two Milanese axes of superior make. The rest are ordinary spears, bills and crossbows and two hollow brass clubs. They all lie. Kill them and be done."

His idea, if not his words, was plain to the Genoese; he began speaking rapidly, almost hysterically.

"What dolts," decided Fletcher. "His master had arranged to betray the ones in the castle to the Count. But he is quite certain his captain was going to take the treasure and betray him as well."

Adam chewed on a bone for a moment. "What is the worth of this fortune? Does he know that?"

No, the man didn't know, but he hastily assured them it was rumored to be the most valuable thing of its size in the world.

"Stones," decided Fletcher. His eyes shone. "Once I saw some, all colors and shadings—tiny bits of rock worth a king's ransom!"

That night the wolves howled and fought among the bodies and Adam sat by the fire and thought for a long time.

"Have you ever heard of this Chateau Martel, Fletcher?"

"No, Adam, but we are far south and I don't know this part of Provence. Why, we are almost to the sea. It was some place built as a protection against the Saracen sea raiders, I wager."

"Why should two lords bid for the services of a company of Genoese mercenaries?"

Fletcher shrugged. "There are not many men left since the Black Death and the wars. There's peace between the French and the English, but the little lords still fight."

"There's a war, that's why. One trying to get the castle—the treasure—and the other trying to hold what he has."

"And what do we do?" asked Jonathan.

"Well, the Free Company days in France are over—others can't see it but I can. There's no more war, and we can't wander around forever. I say we go to Italy and serve with a City, but on the way we will take what fortune has thrust at us."

Jonathan nodded his head: what Adam decided was what he did. Little Fletcher mulled it over in his mind for a time and pulled at his lower lip.

"Aye, we will be like regular retainers—shapers of destiny—aye, like the ancient Praetorian Guard."

And with this decided, they went to sleep.

It was a considerably finer company which marched the next morning. Booty from the Genoese camp had patched many a jerkin, replenished hose and

boots. Every man had a good metal cap now, and most had mail shirts, in addition to padded jerkins. Old swords and daggers had been exchanged for better weapons, either swords or axes.

Adam was proud of his little host—they even kept a rude alignment in marching, far from the straggling of the armies of the day. He had picked out a good mare from the Genoese horses, and several other men rode down the trail. Three wagons, loaded with what the men couldn't carry, were at the rear of the column.

This section of the country hadn't been fought over, but still had a dry, faded look, so common to the lands of France after a generation of war. The Plague had taken a deep toll, not yet replaced, and the demands of the king for men had hit still harder. A growing flock of vultures was circling the wood; it was not the only grisly pile in France.

CHAPTER II

CAPTAIN ADAM

CHATEAU Martel was more than Adam had bargained for, and its appearance gave hopes of considerable reward. Not that it was as large as some he had seen, but whoever had designed the structure had been a keen engineer and chosen his ground well.

Adam held the balance of his men under cover in a small wood beyond arrow shot and rode forward with Fletcher.

"Best you stay here, Jonathan, until we find what is happening."

"Aye, Adam."

Now, much closer, he sat his horse and examined the walls and towers. A large stream ran beyond the castle, cutting into the earth, so that the west side of the structure was on a cliff some hundred feet above the water. A long dried arm of the river had at one time flowed in front of the castle, making a natural moat to the east and north. Southward the land was suitable for attack, but Adam believed that a clever man could still find a way to let water in the dry ox bow and make a swamp on this side.

The walls appeared strong and in good repair, with round towers at the corners; what appeared to be a square keep overlooked the structure, much like the older Norman towers he had known in England as a boy, before he came to the continent to follow the wars.

A cleverly planned barbican protected the gate, which was flanked by two massive towers. The bridge across the dry ditch was built like the letter L, so that no momentum of an attacking force could carry the barbican. All in all, it was a sound plan, well made, with careful consideration being given to missile fire: every part of the structure was commanded by a tower, to the rear or from a flank.

"Well, what do you think, old man?"

"I should say that this is a fine blend of Saracen theory and our best practice," replied Fletcher, as one delivering a lecture. "It is on a commanding spot, yet not isolated for sorties. Whoever built this planned it for missile defense, as well as passive waiting."

"That bears out what the Genoese said about it being a haven from raiders."

"But, master, I don't see a single man on the walls."

"This whole thing is crazy," grumbled Adam. "If I didn't believe we could pick up some gold easily I'd let it all go."

"I have a feeling we are going to make someone mad before this is over," said Fletcher. "The nobility are not to be trifled with, Adam. I have lectured to you on that too many times."

"Oh, shut your sour face!"

Riding forward, Adam came within hailing distance of the barbican. Now he could see that a man was watching him through the embrasures.

"Ho, knave," yelled Adam. "Where is the master of this pile?"

"What do you want?" countered the guard.

"Tell him the men he hired have come."

There was a conference with someone else not seen, and the man stuck his head back through the embrasure.

"Wait a moment," and he too vanished.

For what seemed a long time they

waited, and Adam estimated that the ditch was twenty feet across and eight to ten feet deep, but there were weeds and some small trees growing in the bottom, and it had a look of disrepair. This close, he noticed that the castle walls were as strong as he believed, but a lot of work was needed on the battlements.

"Hey, you, the master will speak with you now."

Adam and Fletcher wheeled their horses a bit and Adam removed his cap and bowed in his saddle.

"I am Adam Cleves, your worship, leader of a band of archers come to take service with your worship."

"By God!" said the man, peering down at them. "English!"

"You have never seen any other who were archers—save the Scotch."

"Where are the Genoese I hired?"

Adam made a sorrowful sound. "They have gone to their heavenly Father and turned the assignment over to us."

There was no sound for a long time; Adam became impatient. "They were poor soldiers, your worship—or we would not be here."

"But their leader was a great man—"

"He looked just like the others when we buried him," interrupted Adam.

"And do you have their invention?" asked the Frenchman.

Adam and Fletcher looked at one another. Here was this magic drivel again. Fletcher winked slightly.

"Aye, your worship—though naturally we will use it only as a last resort and cannot tell of its nature."

This appeared to satisfy the man, and he called, "How many men do you have?"

"Five score, and the finest lads in the world."

"Hmmm, that's less than the others by a score."

"These are English archers, not Genoese bowmen. I could send half back and still do a better job."

"I've seen you perform," said the man grimly. "I do not underestimate the English archer—nor admire the English knight for using him."

"Well, your worship," demanded Adam. "Are we to serve you, or shall I be on my way?"

"What do you know of the wages promised?"

"We will take our keep and whatever you promised to pay the others. I can see that you are a gentleman and would not rob a poor soldier."

The man in the barbican tower was very old, and it troubled him to think. This might be a trick, and it might not—there was nothing unusual in two mercenary bands slaughtering one another. Or—it could be a trick of Andre's. It was too hot, and he was tired, and there was nothing he could do anyway.

"Bring in your men," he called.

"Open the gates," countered Adam.

"Why?"

"So that I may see we are not to be shot when we approach. I am a cautious man, your worship."

"You're a scoundrel, Englishman," muttered the man sardonically. "And if you aren't, you will be soon."

He turned; there was a creaking; the gate opened in the outer barbican. Adam rode back and sounded three notes on his horn. At this signal Jonathan began leading the company from the woods.

FROM the barbican tower the Frenchman watched; he nodded in approval at the close formation of the men, for he had never seen anything like this in foot soldiery. Frankly, he would have preferred the Genoese, for they knew their place. The English Free Companies were often irresponsible ruffians to his way of thinking, too free with their arrows, as eager to shoot down a knight as a serf.

His opinion was not changed when he noticed a not inconsiderable number of men with missing ears, and at least one had a brand on his forehead. They walked through the gate and along the winding way of the barbican and across the bridge into the castle proper. Jean of Fabouis had the impression that he had hired a fine body of cutthroats.

"Well," he muttered, "that is what I must have—so be it."

Inside the castle Adam found that a stone wall divided the place into two halves, though not breaking up the wall plan and preventing men from being

shifted rapidly from one danger spot to another. The quarters inside the walls were of stone, well built, not like the hovels he had known before. There were extensive stables and shops, but there were almost no people about; his eyes found less than a half dozen men at arms visible.

Adam turned and forced an expression of pleasure to his lips. "A most noble dwelling, your worship. I feel certain this will be a bargain we will both find to our pleasure."

"You speak well for a soldier," conceded the old man. "And it may or may not be to our pleasure. I am Jean Fabouis, formerly of the Temple—though no longer, naturally."

"Your servant, your worship," and Adam introduced Jonathan and Fletcher.

"You might as well come along now and meet the real master, my niece," said Jean Fabouis.

"Your niece?" said Adam surprisedly.

And as they turned away the ferret-eyed Fletcher saw the look of hatred one of the guards gave Adam, and the little scribe made a mental note to watch the man.

The keep was a rectangular tower with an entrance fifteen feet above the ground, the lower section of solid masonry. Entrance was by a stairway on the outside of the building. Once inside they waited a moment for their eyes to become accustomed to the half light.

"This way," said Jean. "Ordinarily we live in the regular quarters, but we are too short-manned to take any chances and stay here."

Another stair, and they came into a hallway, again a stair, and they were almost to the top of the structure. A knock on a door, and a sleepy voice bade them enter.

The girl had long, black hair and eyes as though some alchemist had somehow coated fire with ice. She was sitting on a pile of skins combing her hair, while a serving girl held a silver mirror. She was self-contained, confident, and had the look of a she-devil.

"What is it, my uncle?" Her voice was soft and husky and made little chills run up and down Adam's spine. She was the loveliest creature he had seen in his life.

"This is the leader of the company I hired."

"This is no Genoese."

Calmly she surveyed Adam, from his boot soles, up the length of his hose—and he was suddenly thankful that he had worn his best pair—checked his metal shirt and glanced in curiosity at the bow and quiver of arrows, rested a long time on his face.

"You are a handsome man," she decided, and he flushed a bit.

"Thank you, my lady."

"Very gallant," she decided. "Gallant and insolent, I wager."

There was a pause. "I thought you would like to know," said the old man awkwardly.

"Bah," she replied. "That idiot of a Count won't have the nerve to hurt me."

"He doesn't have to hurt you to take this castle."

"Oh, I suppose not," she said, boredly. "You might as well know," she said turning to Adam, "even though you are just a common soldier. My feudal lord, the Count of Provence, wants this castle—he's mad at me anyway, poor man. And the Church wants it, *and* the King—everyone wants it. But I myself want it."

"I see, My Lady," said Adam.

"I doubt if you do," she corrected. "Anyway, I will explain more to you about these matters—alone."

As they left she gave him a long glance, and the serving girl was watching him, though careful that her mistress didn't notice.

"THAT IS my niece," remarked Jean Fabouis, when they were downstairs again. "She is not a gentle girl and should have been a man."

"She appears high-spirited," replied Adam guardedly.

The other coughed dryly. "Yes, doesn't she? My nephew, her husband, held this castle as a special grant from the King. He was killed at Poitiers," and the old man gave Adam a tired look. "I have done what an old man could, but my fighting days have been over a long time."

They walked down the stairs of the keep; few of the archers could be seen, but the large man-at-arms who had been in the barbican was standing at the foot of the stairs.

"My lord, a word with you," he demanded.

"What is it, Antonio?"

"What is my place—" he gave Adam a contemptuous glance—"now the Englishman is here?"

"He is captain of the castle guard now," decided Jean. "The older members will be formed into a personal guard for my niece and be under his command."

"I can't see serving under the likes of him," muttered the man.

Adam removed his bow and quiver, calmly unbuckled his sword belt and went over and slapped the man against the wall, and when he came back he gave him a thorough drubbing and had one of his men carry him to the castle well and revive him.

"He won't feel quite so bad now," observed Adam.

This incident took little time. Jean watched with professional interest while his new captain was disciplining the old; he noticed that archers had been posted on the walls. The remainder were unloading the captured Genoese wagons and making themselves at home in the guardhouse and quarters attached to the stables. There was an air of efficiency about the procedure that was quite reassuring.

Jonathan was directing the work, while Fletcher checked the wagon's contents against the list in his hand.

"These two you can always trust," he said. "Should anything happen to me you can depend on Jonathan. And Bachelor Fletcher is a fine hand with figures and writing and keeping of records."

He said the last carelessly, but the Frenchman gave no indication that he had need of a scribe.

By nightfall Jonathan and Fletcher had accompanied Adam over every square inch of the castle and had a list of all the people inside the walls and how long they had been with Jean. The old Templar was surprised at this, but Adam told him Fletcher was eccentric and liked to keep records.

"Of course we didn't make a thorough search," said Jonathan, "but I didn't see any spot where a great treasure could be hidden."

"I recall," mused Fletcher, "where a lord in Flanders had a great fortune concealed in a secret passage in his dungeon."

"We will measure all the walls and take soundings of the walls and floors," decided Jonathan.

"Now, about the people who are in the castle."

Adam checked the list: there were seven spearmen who could use crossbows if necessary, and the Italian captain. A miller and an armorer, so old he was good for practically nothing, the serving maid to the girl and three women who cooked, the husband of one. A small crowd for such a large place.

"Little wonder the Church and the rival lords wish to possess the place," said Fletcher. "When one becomes weak anything happens."

"Well, someone will be in for a surprise," decided Adam.

"It is a sad commentary on the times," continued Fletcher. "Here is a once mighty fief, a bulwark against the Saracen, and now it is about finished, a prize fought over by men too cowardly to dare attempt any such thing during stronger days."

"These people aren't the only ones ruined by the wars and the Plague."

"No, Adam, all through history—"

"Oh, hush, Bachelor," commanded Jonathan. "This is not Oxford."

Late that night Adam was walking along the wall top covering the south; as he stepped down to go into the tower on the corner, a crossbow quarrel shattered against the stones, throwing sparks and dust into his face. He sounded the alarm at once, and the yard below was quickly filled with the men on watch.

A search discovered a bow lying on the ground near the south sally port, which meant nothing, as there were ten score crossbows stored in the castle. More to the point, Captain Antonio, he of the surly disposition and battered head, was missing.

CHAPTER III

AFFAIRS OF STATE

FLETCHER was bubbling. "Oh, intrigue. Verily, master Adam, this is grand. Not like our regular cutthroat operations. We are lords and nobles and involved in affairs of state."

"The devil take that," grumbled Adam. "It's plain murder—except when a noble has it done, and then it's assassination and quite proper."

As a matter of fact, being involved in matters of state was more than Adam bargained for, or wished. There had been a messenger from the Count, and now His Eminence the Bishop was in conference with Jean and his niece.

"Why is the Church interested in this?" and Adam wrinkled his brow and wished that he were back fighting with the Black Prince and life were again simple.

His Eminence was a large man, one not likely to be confused with the Church, appearing more a warrior than a bishop, and in fact, all of this was so. He was dressed in black hose and wore a fine mail shirt under his cloak; when Adam entered the room his head was bare and he had a fine feathered cap on the chair, but an exquisitely engraved Milanese helmet of the bassinet type was hanging at his saddle bow below in the courtyard—balanced by a heavy mace.

When Adam entered and bowed, the Bishop turned from Jean and gave him a long look. "I was telling my old friend how pleased I am that he had at last found retainers to protect his lands."

Adam bowed. "It is our pleasure to serve him, Your Grace."

"This land has always been a special project of the Church, dedicated as it is to protection against the sea rovers of Africa."

"Are they the ones we must fear now, Your Grace?"

The Bishop again gave him that long look. Dammit, it would have been simpler had the Genoese been not so stupid, he thought to himself. This one may not be as easily handled.

"You have the look of a soldier, my friend, I am certain you will protect the castle against all foes."

"I have the utmost confidence in him," said Jean.

"And how is your charming niece?"

There was some talk of a small nature and passing of the news, some reminiscing of days past, when the Bishop had been a younger man.

"I followed the wars myself as a boy," the Bishop told Adam, "until I felt the call of God and took the vows."

There was a look of laughter on the old Templar's face, but he turned so that his guest would not see it, and Adam had his own doubts regarding the seriousness of the Bishop's convictions. He had seen too many churchman-warriors and too many warrior-churchmen. The most powerful barons were the churchmen.

And old Jean Fabouis—being a Knight Templar hadn't made the Bishop dislike him the less. Of course that had all happened long ago and the Temple disbanded. He thought for a moment—1314 it was, fifty years. Why, old Fabouis was seventy or more.

Adam went down and had the watch on guard line up for the Bishop, which pleased that worthy no end.

"By God! A fine body for Englishmen and scoundrels. No offense, my friend, but I have followed the course of the wars and know what the Free Companies are like." He turned and gave Adam a long look. "Would you be interested in finding another master? Say for twice what you are now making?"

Too surprised to say anything, the archer stared at him. "Your Grace does me honor," he managed to stammer.

"I know a good man when I see one. No hurry, my friend. My lands are large. I still maintain a few holdings of my father's—until such time as legal arrangements can be made to turn them over to the Church, naturally."

He mounted and walked his horse throughout the courtyard, his guard following, They were fine brawny fellows, their mail studded with plate until they were almost completely protected by iron. The Bishop must be wealthy indeed to afford such harness for his retainers, thought Adam.

And His Grace was cursing under his breath and once was on the point of turning back, but he kept on, and the men on watch saw the party vanish in the woods to the east of the castle.

Long before this, a summons had come from the Countess that she desired to see Captain Adam. The serving girl had brought the message.

Adam and Jonathan were standing before the keep when the girl came down the stairs. She was a different person away from the influence of her mistress. Taller than the Countess, she was as light as the other was dark, probably Norman, or Teutonic, or she might have been anything. Jonathan stared in open-mouthed adoration, but Adam had seen the other one and was still thinking of her. There was no doubt that the girl had him in her mind, for she gave him her mistress's message and looked at him as she backed up the steps and vanished inside.

"By the Holy Saints, Adam, did you see the behind on that one! What a wondrous wench she is—why can she not look at me like she did at you?"

"I had best see what the she-devil wants," muttered Adam. "Don't be a fool, man."

When he entered the room in the keep, the girl was in a corner bundling some gowns together. The Countess looked at him.

"Come over here and sit down," she invited.

"Thank you, my lady," Adam answered, seating himself.

"Now that we have some protection in this place, I will move back to the regular quarters. You will send some men to help Nanette with the things.... No, not yet. Talk to me for a moment. I get lonely up here by myself all day." She gave him a look and said carelessly, "And it's lonely at night, too."

"I get very little sleep during the night," said Adam. "There's small time for me to be lonely—what with making rounds."

"My quarters are on the wall circuit," she told him. "I hope you see that my apartment is well protected."

"It will have my personal attention."

"You speak well for an Englishman."

"In my youth I spent some time in the university at Oxford, but I had small funds and the lure of the wars was too great. With one of my teachers, the old one, Fletcher, I came to France. Perhaps my ten years in your lands have made me a gentleman."

"You are *born* a gentleman," she corrected him. "Still you have charm and a fine figure." She examined him again as one would a horse in a market place. And Adam appraised her in turn. She was lovely and had a figure like an angel, but he wasn't used to great ladies. Adam had a vague feeling that he would be well out of all this, lovely figure and love to the contrary.

FOR a time it looked as though he would have little opportunity for practicing his profession of arms. Adam and his company seemed to have fallen into a vat of butter, with a tour of duty in the towers the hardest thing possible. And the good captain was summoned almost every day on some pretext or another to the apartment of the Countess.

"She is lovely," Adam admitted to Jonathan, "but I cannot trust the woman somehow."

Jonathan shook his head in wonder. "We were boys together, and we have fought the French together. Why could I have not had a fine head and a smooth tongue—ah, if she would look at me for just one night!"

"It is not for us to speak this way," protested Fletcher. "She is a great lady, and—"

"And we are men," answered the irrepressible Jonathan. "Lord in Heaven, what a backside that serving wench has!"

"Oh it is quite proper to speak of *her*," said Fletcher.

"I'm not interested in speaking of her," and he gave Fletcher a broad wink, whereupon that worthy giggled and turned red.

"Well, enough of her and her mistress. What I want to know is, will the great Count show himself. And I'd like to know what happened to that Italian dog and where does the Bishop fit into this scheme of affairs."

"Devil with them," grumbled Jona-

than, "let's talk about the women."

"Such talk for a soldier," scolded Fletcher. "We should make plans—when we get cooped up under siege there will be time enough for wenches."

"You could be right," mused Adam. "This matter is going too smooth."

The next several days he was too busy to visit the Countess, for he had embarked on a rapid repair campaign. One group of men cut all the brush along the moat and slashed down the small trees within arrowshot of the walls. No cover existed for any attacking force before the walls.

Another party, with a mason in charge, made replacements of the loose stones on the battlements of the east and south walls.

Jean noticed the increased activity. "What does this signify, my friend?"

"Well, my lord, the men are growing stale from sitting about. And you have led me to believe there may be a visit from the Count."

"He will be here one bright day," said the other miserably. "We had best take in all the wood and water and food we can find in the neighborhood."

"That will be our next assignment," promised Adam.

The castle village was across the river to the west, a settlement of about thirty families who worked the fields of the fief. Adam and Jonathan and a small party rode over the following day to see what they could seize in the way of foodstuffs, also to check on any strong young men.

Most of the people were in the fields, but one old fellow had a primitive form of inn, though no one ever came this way and he made what living he could from the villagers' love of wine.

"Will it be war, my masters?" he asked, his eyes glancing shrewdly from man to man. "Ye are new at the castle."

"There is always war, old man," replied Adam. "What do you have in the way of corn and wheat?"

"Little enough. God's thanks we have not been attacked by the Moslems in this generation, and the wars have not come this far south—but I smell trouble," he added.

"Well, you've the nose for it," decided Jonathan. "And what does that horrible red organ smell?"

"You won't be so smart when the Count takes the castle," sneered the old man. "There have been strange men about lately—mounted men with iron on them," and he gave the unprotected archers a scornful look.

"You seem to know a lot—what about the Count and the castle?"

"We common folk hear things," answered the man cautiously. "I am merely repeating gossip."

So they took him inside his inn, where a slight application of fire and some more questioning brought out several interesting facts.

The Count was in the immediate neighborhood and had had several talks with the Bishop. The two appeared hand in glove. Several of the Count's men had been trying to buy provisions and had boasted that their master would teach the people in the castle a lesson.

Just to be on the safe side, Adam had the old man carried back to the castle and put to work in the kitchen, for he was afraid that he would tell about their visit.

"This looks darker and darker," he grumbled. "I am supposed to be a heconcubine and captain of the guard in one. There is some form of a dirty plot mixed in all this. There's gold, but we can't find a trace of it. I hope Italy is better than this."

His gloomy grumblings did nothing to affect his military judgment. Parties of three men were mounted on the best horses and worked in relays about three leagues from the castle. The remaining work was rushed to completion. All the wood possible was carted into the main court. Several of the young men in the village volunteered for work and service, but the others gradually vanished in the woods and up the coast. In time of raids from the sea they had taken refuge in the castle, but this was a matter of nobles and affairs of state, and they wanted no part of choosing a possible loser.

Matters drifted for some days, with scouts reporting more and more armed men, apparently acting as advance guards for the Count. One was cornered and slain in the village; Jean looked at

the bright emblem on the man's jacket.

"That is Andre's mark," he said. "The Count will be here soon."

And two days later the trio on duty watching the road to the east came in haste and reported that the attack was a matter of days now. They had spotted an encampment of a large body.

"What can you say regarding numbers?"

"Almost to the man, Adam," answered the man. "They didn't take much in the way of shelter, and we watched them a whole day, or until we were sure they were marching this way. I would say there are a round thousand men." He turned to his companions for support, and they nodded.

Every man within the castle able to drop a stone from the walls would give Adam a figure short of a hundred and fifty. Even with strong walls and good English archers the prospect was not too inviting.

SOME leagues to the east, His Grace, the Count of Provence was having his own troubles.

"Damn that charlatan, Domingo—he was always a fool. His magic! Well, it was probably no better than his crossbow." He glared at the former captain of the Chateau Martel guard. "Now you say they are all dead and some English archer band is in their place?"

"Yes, my Lord," answered Antonio. "You will never know what a time I had getting here with the news. I trust Your Grace will remember my services—"

"Oh, shut up. This changes everything. This may develop into a regular siege, with these hungry dogs eating me out of all I have. Well, I shall have to get this over and get that old fool's money to pay this crew."

"There are no more than a hundred men in there—"

"Yes, but I can lose men against archers—well, I'll lose them! I mean to have that gold, and I—"

It would not do for a count to say such things to a scum of a mercenary, but he had almost said he intended having the Countess. Not that he cared for her, but he had graciously decided to marry her following her husband's death. She, with the perverse nature of a woman, had agreed; all was in readiness, and she thereupon changed her mind.

She would see, that one . . .

Adam kept a screen of mounted men in the woods following the news of the imminent approach of the Count; several of the villagers who could ride were employed, as he wanted to keep his own men at hand. He cautioned the men to use their eyes, stay clear and run at the first certain sign; by keeping to the woods they had a fair chance of avoiding the Count's retainers.

He had one last project he wanted to finish, and his men were even working

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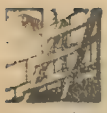
by torchlight far into the night. Adam had checked the course of the river and believed that he could dig a canal large enough to again flood the old streambed. The ditch had been slow going, but by the time they could see the Count's banners on the horizon, a good trickle of water was muddying the bottom of the ditch. The last of his men had little more than reached the shelter of the barbican when a body of a hundred horsemen rode up and made a circuit of the walls and went north to the ford and crossed to the opposite side of the river.

By nightfall the entire army was on the plain before the castle, and a dozen campfires winked in the gloom. Castle Martel was under siege.

CHAPTER IV

FIRST BLOOD



ANDRE of Provence rushed the castle shortly after daylight. A shrewd leader, he had gathered his men without giving any sign that an attack was coming. When the sentries shouted the alarm it was barely light, a factor which hampered the besiegers. In his desire for secrecy Andre had kept his men from making any extensive reconnaissance, and depended on his past knowledge of the castle.

Unaware that the ditch was half filled with muddy water, his men bogged and had trouble getting their ladders across. The long ladders which he had so carefully fashioned on the way down and carried concealed in his wagons, were used as improvised bridges for the men to clamber across to the castle side of the moat.

Then the arrows struck.

"Aim for the men with the ladders," Jonathan passed the word. "Don't let them take the ladders back."

Sheltered by the battlements the archers took deliberate aim and sped their shafts into the struggling men. Soon there were bodies floating in the half water, half mud of the ditch. More and more men fell on the far bank.

One ladder was raised near the intersection of the south corner tower and the curtain wall. A group of archers gathered with spears and waited until the attackers began climbing; when almost to the embrasures they placed their spears on the uprights and shoved the screaming mass of men and timber backward into the ditch. Crowding to see, the Englishmen laughed and shouted and made coarse jests. The lowest men on the ladder jumped clear, but the topmost climbers were smashed; one was thrown clear across the ditch and landed with a crash of armor that could be heard atop the wall.

Surprise failing, the Count's men sought to escape. A group of crossbowmen came in quite close and began covering their retreat. The men were protected by woven mantelets and kept up a brisk fire that was not without results, several men on the curtain wall being struck by their bolts. In return they lost a few men.

The attack was over as soon as it began. A number of horsemen had ridden out to encourage their footmen, but when the archers killed two horses and bounced a shaft off the armor of another, they fell back. A trumpet sounded, and the attackers pulled back in what order they could, from the out-and-out flight of the unprotected ladder bearers to the slow, step by step retreat of the crossbowmen and their shield bearers.

"Well, that ends the first time," said Adam.

"A not inconsiderable victory, master," decided Fletcher. "He is a dangerous man, that Count. That was a well planned attack. Had it not been for the water in the ditch many of those men would have reached the walltop."

"Well, he didn't—that time, and he won't again."

Adam unstrung his bow and beckoned to his second in command.

"Jonathan, I want all those ladders you can get inside."

"I could take the serfs, while all the rest would be on the walls to cover us with their arrows," suggested Jonathan.

"We will work it that way, but they must be in soon. The devils will take them away tonight, or be back with their

shield bearers. The more work we make for him the better."

The attackers had had enough of arrows for a time; they could be seen carrying their wounded back and regrouping in their camp. The job of bringing in the ladders was simple. There was enough timber for several stone-casters. But a good week's work by the Count's carpenters would soon replace them.

Nearly a hundred bodies were in the ditch and on the near side, under the walls, and several more out on the plain. The castle forces counted three wounded.

"It is a marvelous demonstration of the power of walls and missile action," lectured Fletcher. "When I write my treatise on war, I must devote some time to this action—"

"Yes, be certain that you do," said Adam. "And when you have time, see how many arrows we have available, or you won't live to write any history."

"Aye, master Adam, immediately. What a glorious day this is!"

Which was both true and false, for sometime during the excitement, when everyone was supposedly on the walls, or in the towers, the old warrior, Jean, had been stabbed to death. His body was found by the men in the south tower when they came down to eat. He had evidently been going up on the wall circuit, when a dagger was thrust into his back.

THE girl took the news calmly, even coldly. "One expects such things in war," she said.

"But he wasn't killed in the attack," explained Adam. "Your uncle was murdered—killed with a knife!"

"Some more of your tales, eh? That motherless Count is at the bottom of this —I'll kill that dog."

"He is a clever man, and a dangerous one."

"Forget him," she commanded. "I guess you are in command, now that my dear uncle is gone."

"Yes, Your Lady—"

"Don't 'My Lady' me, you handsome blond devil. Come here."

Adam stammered and tried to draw away. "But, My Lady, there are things to—"

"Let someone else do them," she muttered. And she grabbed his arm and pulled him down beside her. She kissed him, a kiss like nothing he had ever known before, and one does not fight ten years in a bitter war and not get to know women.

"I'm tired of being alone," she said fiercely. "Because my husband was stupid and got killed is no reason why I must remain cooped up like some nun in a convent!"

So, it happened that no one saw Adam for the remainder of the morning . . .

And it was well into the day before he could think clearly, or get his mind back on the problem of besting the attacking force.

Sitting down in his quarters, he tried to figure out what was before them. For one thing, they had a large force of men intent on capturing the castle; this he had to prevent, as it would mean loss of the treasure—which, two, he as yet hadn't been able to locate. Three, there was some member of the force a traitor, maybe several. The Countess was going to be a problem, a pleasant problem, true —but a problem. She had trouble deciding whether she was a lady or a serving maid. As he could see it, there was a matter of treachery, a fight and romance of a sort, all mixed in such a manner that someone was going to be badly hurt before it was settled.

"They are building mangonels in the enemy camp," Fletcher informed him.

"What would you say would be our fate if we surrendered to the Count?"

"I doubt if he would treat us as brothers," replied the little scribe.

A considerable body of men were working with axes near the woods beyond the enemy camp; part of the men were felling trees while the others shaped them into timbers.

"I wonder what they can be about?"

"Stone-casters — mangonels," insisted Fletcher. "Engines to batter the walls. That Andre isn't going to try any more rushing against arrows."

Later in the day it developed that he was right: the gradual flow of water in

the ditch and the spilling over into the swampy lowland south of the castle stopped. The sentries in the north towers reported men at work blocking the river ditch. This done, Andre established a strong camp on the site. The ditch would probably be dry enough for men to cross in a week.

"Well, he is no fool, that Count," grudgingly admitted Adam. "We will have a time with him."

He was actually more worried about what might happen inside the castle than about the Count's efforts, dangerous though they were. Adam would let none of the original guard take any watch in the barbican, or near a sally port. The villagers were used for manual labor and given some instruction in winding and firing crossbows, but not employed as sentries.

"I tell you, Jonathan, there is still something more they can do. If the Genoese planned to betray this place they must have had men already here. The Italian, Antonio, was one, but *he* did not kill the old man."

"To be sure, why don't we simply kill everyone who is not in the company?"

Fletcher perked up his ears. "A truly royal scheme," he applauded. "In that manner we would have no cause for alarm and could devote all our energies to fighting the Count and stealing this accursed treasure."

"To begin with, there are too many innocent people, and we need them to help fight. No, we'll have to wait. We will do more than keep the suspected ones off guard. Place a guard over the Countess and forbid any of the servants going out at dark."

Now that he had no cause to hide his interest from the old Templar, Adam and his two companions searched the castle from dungeon to the top of the keep. Every room was checked: walls were tapped and each large stone tested and pried for looseness. Panels were sounded, suspected sections torn down. A secret sally port opening on the cliff to the west was discovered, a last means of escape for the garrison in past ages and long since plastered over.

There was no sign of any treasure or hiding place for gold.

"Could we have been tricked, Adam?"

"It seems that way, but so have too many other people. It *must* be here somewhere. We will go over everything again."

ANDRE made fast work with his stone-casters: their completion was announced one morning when a stone the size of a man's head crashed in the dirt of the courtyard and scared Fletcher out of his wits.

"God's Holy Name!" he moaned. "A step nearer the well and I would have been no taller than that." He made a small space between his hands and shivered all over.

Stones struck the walls and fell inside the castle all day. The roof of the stables was shattered in a dozen places, and the animals were moved close under the east wall where they were safe. Two men were injured by fragments of stone, and the entire garrison became nervous, not knowing where the next missile would fall. Other than skeleton crews in the strongest towers, the men stayed under cover in the keep and went into the open yard only when necessary. After a time they learned to estimate safety periods by watching the arm of the stone-caster, but there was no way of telling after dark.

There was no sign of an assault, but the attackers had strong parties patrolling around the castle, in addition to their main camp and the smaller post guarding the ford. There was no chance of slipping through undetected, and Adam had too few men for extended sorties. The construction of engines went on in the camp, the framework of a covered shed being visible from the walls.

Adam put a few men to work building two stone-casters. Fletcher carefully figured angles and the height of the walls and decided that by using strong weights and small stones they could outrange the Count. They took the next three days and shaped the long beam of one of the captured ladders and mounted it on a stand so that it was pivoted near one end. Fletcher had two large boxes filled with dirt and stones and fastened them

to one end of the beam nearest the pivot.

On the opposite end he fitted a spoon-shaped container. When the long end of the beam was drawn down and loaded, the counter weight pulled down the opposite end and moved the beam on the pivot, casting the stone into the air. He was chuckling and rubbing his hands like a child with a new toy.

"This will be a surprise to our good friend, Adam."

And they had another surprise. Since the mangonels had been set up before the castle Adam had restrained his men from shooting at them with the greatest difficulty. Not being bothered by arrow fire, the Count's men had neglected to erect shields and palisades. Underestimating the range of the English bows, they calmly went on battering the walls.

For his part, Fletcher was casting stones in the opposite direction. Selecting a spot he estimated was the same distance from the walls as the tents and wagons of the enemy he had the village serfs work the ropes and haul the beam to the floor of the tower. All day he experimented with stones and the weights on the mangonel. The serfs chipped stones, loaded and unloaded, until they were wet with sweat and considered him mad. By late afternoon he had the weight and size of stone adjusted one to the other and knew how far his machine could cast.

"Oh, what a surprise they will have in the morning," he promised. "I must make a mention of this in my treatise."

There was no unusual sign of activity in the castle that night, though men worked almost until dawn. Placed inside the stables, the poor serfs chipped rocks to the dimensions selected by Fletcher, who, when he was not in the tower supervising the erecting of his engine, was among them hefting the missiles and selecting the one that met his specifications.

Adam had selected a dozen of his best men, the keenest of eye, with the strongest bows. It was only a matter of time before Andre discovered his mistake and erected shields, but before that happened he was going to lose some men. It was a good two hundred paces to the enemy machines, but with the added height of the walls and by shooting high in the air he believed they could slay a few.

Fletcher bustled about in the tower top like a Constable of France, giving orders, tugging at the ropes and counting his stones. He hefted one of the rocks, about the size of a man's hand, and nodded to the men at the ropes. Slowly they tugged the beam down, and he kissed the stone and placed it in the spoon.

"A happy voyage," he murmured. "Now!"

There was a swish as the long arm of the beam jerked skyward; the stone vanished in the half gloom.

"Quickly," hurried Fletcher. "We must cast many before they can get out of their camp and scatter."

A round dozen missiles hurtled through the air before there was any sign of commotion in the enemy camp. In the half gloom several torches were lit from the burned down camp fires. Fletcher was doubled up with laughter.

"Oh, the fools, they think someone is playing a joke!"

As the torches ran about in the growing light, he continued to place the stones in the spoon, and the long arm flicked them at the tents.

CHAPTER V

THE PRICE OF WAR

ANDRE, Count of Provence, was sleeping in his lovely conical field tent, when a small stone ripped through the top and knocked his guard speechless. His restful dreams of wealth shattered by a loud ripping, the Frenchman sat up on his couch and called for his retainer. It was still half dark inside the tent and it took him a moment to find the body of the man at the back of the tent.

Someone cursed outside and called for the watch, and Andre did some cursing of his own, for a rock had just crashed into one of the wagons inside. A fine mare was hit squarely on the forehead and died before his eyes.

A dozen men were struck down before they had a chance to get back.

"Get some light here and stop this stone throwing!" Andre rushed out in his drawers and began looking for the culprits.

A man was hit in the face and knocked ten feet; another had a leg broken and lay on the ground and cried in a voice of agony.

Men were spilling all over the place. As each missile landed, they would cry out, or rush to help some dead or injured companion. One landed squarely in a fire and scattered embers over the Count's tent. While he rallied his men and rushed them down to the mangonels, his possessions went up in smoke behind him.

In their eagerness to get to their own engines, the besiegers bunched and forgot that a long shaft can fly for many, many paces. Naturally they didn't know that Adam and his selected dozen were

lining the east wall and had been waiting ever since Fletcher cast his first stone.

It was too far for accurate shooting against an individual man, but the Englishmen fired in groups at each bunched target. Arrows fell into the ground around the men; some stuck in the timbers of the mangonels, and many more fell into flesh. This was worse than the stones in the camp. A dozen men were down before they had a chance to get back. One stone rose and crashed against the keep wall before commonsense gained the better of anger. As fast as they had rushed down to their engines the Frenchmen dashed back.

In the course of a half a glass Andre had a dozen men killed and that many more injured; his belongings were burned; two horses were killed and several wagons damaged. The entire main camp area was dangerous and he must vacate and set up again within the woods. All day he drove his men making mantelets and shield for the stone-casters. And his men did his bidding with speed and kept out of his way, for he was an angry, bitter man.

The spirits of the defenders were proportionately high; they couldn't tell how much damage had been done in the camp, but it was plain the enemy was moving back, and there were the bodies down by the mangonels to attest to the archers' skill.

Fletcher gathered up all the materials and timbers he could lay hands on and began construction of another mangonel. "I wager our friend is a mad man now," he giggled. "It will take a lot of silver to pay for that beautiful tent."

Much to the surprise of everyone, however, the Count was willing to forget the entire matter. At any rate, the Bishop appeared next day and rode up to the gate and called for admittance.

"We welcome Your Grace," said Adam courteously, while little Fletcher stood to one side and watched like a hawk.

"I deplore this bloodshed in my Diocese," explained the churchman. "I have talked to the Count and now come to plead with you to cease."

"You can see, Your Grace that *we* have done nothing save defend ourselves," protested Adam.

"And quite well," grunted the other. He led Adam to one side. "My offer still holds—twice what you get here."

They were walking along the courtyard towards the keep steps. The Bishop half stopped at sight of a row of rude crosses near the wall.

"God rest their souls," he murmured piously. "I shall have a mass for them."

"Thank you, Father," replied Adam. "The price of war is high."

Fletcher grinned behind the cleric's back and stuck out his tongue. A half dozen archers were lying in the ruined sheds along the west wall; others helped them with their wounds.

"You *have* suffered," said the Bishop. "Why continue?"

"What are we to do—half our men gone, or crippled—if we surrender, what then?" Adam shrugged and made a motion across his throat.

"I must stop this," muttered the Bishop—half your men—hmm. I am not without influence with the Count, who is a good man at heart. Perhaps we can arrange terms."

"We will be willing to listen to any proposal, Your Grace, anything with honor."

And, almost as soon as he had come, without entering the keep, the churchman departed.

"And what do you say to that, Bachelor of Arts?"

"I would wager that our Holy One came here with an entirely different proposition in view," Fletcher chuckled dryly. "If he knew only dirt was under those humped graves along the wall he would be a surprised man."

"Or that the injured are smeared with blood from a slaughtered calf."

"Aye, he came to bargain, and when he saw we were reduced to half our strength, he decided against it. Now why would he—unless he were with the Count—or is the Count with him?"

Adam shrugged. "That is a question for you in your wisdom, writer of scrolls. I am interested in the miller right now."

The miller had made a slight error in judgment: he thought Adam had been joking when he ordered no movement

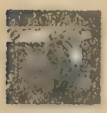
outside quarters after sundown. As a result, he had an arrow shot through his shoulder by one of the tower guards. While Adam was talking to the Bishop, Jonathan had the wounded man below in the dungeon. It was quite cozy, despite the dampness, for the Englishman had a blazing fire going, and from time to time warmed the prisoner with a hot poker, in fact whenever the other seemed to have a loss of memory.

The hotter the poker, the more the man talked. He was to signal whenever a sortie was to take place, the sign being a torch from the south tower. And, when he was burned almost to a crisp, he finally admitted stabbing the old Templar.

But even when the stench of burned flesh was enough to make one of the young archers sick, the miller couldn't tell who was behind all this, other than that he was paid by the Bishop. And the part of the Genoese was still a mystery, but they had a weapon with them in their wagon that would enable the Count and the Bishop to rule France.

"Half the people in France seem to believe this magic foolishness," grumbled Adam.

Fletcher was writing all this in Latin in his treatise on war and wondering what his former companions in Oxford would say should they ever see him again.



THE siege was not going well for those in the castle. The swamp along the south curtain was about dry and would soon be no barrier to an attack from that direction. The ditch was again dry. In the enemy camp, now removed from Fletcher's long reach, a tower was being constructed and a covered shed.

There seemed no doubt that that report of heavy losses had encouraged the Count, and he was rushing his plans for an early assault. However, other than a close guard, no attempt was made—the besiegers kept a cautious five hundred paces from the walls.

Both sides continued to eat. While there was a better supply in the castle, the wagons of the Count could roam for miles, and his forage parties kept him well supplied. It was evident that he could last longer than the Englishman.

And there was the Countess Jeanne, in addition to other troubles.

"I want to ride," she demanded. "I grow weary of this stone fortress. I want a sight of the trees and the grass under foot."

"But, my lady, we can't take a risk."

"Well, you blond devil, entertain me!"

There was only one way to entertain her, which was not too difficult, in fact the most pleasant work he had ever done. But he was getting entirely too involved with the lady, for her serving girl, the pretty one so admired by Jonathan, and so stricken with Adam, chanced to speak to him in the hall within hearing of her mistress.

The Countess was waiting when he came back in the room. "You blond scoundrel!" she screamed and threw a vase at him.

"My lady," he protested. "What in the world has happened?"

"So, you prefer that trollop to me! You English dog!"

She broke practically everything in the room before he could get to her and hold her arms. "Well, don't just stand there with a stupid look on your face—kiss me!"

Later, he confided to Fletcher, "All women are alike, old man. Noble or base-born, they all have the same temper and the same strange manner of doing things."

"Ah, it is so," agreed the other. "A wise man himself can never tell what they'll do. Solomon could, they say, which I doubt. Nor do I wager a great one like Friar Bacon, for all his learning, knows the way of a woman's mind." He stopped and slapped himself. *"Oh!"*

Adam stopped eating a bite of beef and stared at him. "Are you sick, Fletcher?"

"Sick in the mind," groaned the other. "Friar Bacon! Now I know—sulphur."

"What are you talking about, fool? What sulphur?"

"I know what the Genoese leader had that was so great. It is the *substance,* the exploding fire, mentioned by the great Bacon. I have read his work."

"Do you mean the things King Edward used at Crécy?"

"Aye, the fire-casters."

"Do you think you can make this weapon?"

"It takes charcoal, too; that I remember, but I can't recall what proportions of each material are to be used."

"You study all your life and don't remember."

"But, Adam, it was written in gibberish; Bacon claimed it was dangerous to give such information to everyone."

Adam thought for a moment. "Well, you will take everything in the wagons, and I'll place you in a tower. You will stay there until you can make the weapon."

"Will you feed me?" asked Fletcher anxiously. "It may take some time, you understand."

"A little now and then. Remember, old man, your reputation is at stake. If this is successful, what a chapter in the treatise! If not, I may decide I can get along without a scribe."

THE Countess must have Adam eat with her, and he went at her bidding, since it was better than dining alone. And he was beginning to worry about the treasure. The Count was almost ready for an attack; food was low, and the gold was no nearer now than it had been before.

If she was a bit surprised at the warmth of his manner, she didn't complain. "I was afraid your heart was as light as your hair," she muttered. "This is better," and he kissed her so hard she had to break away to get her breath.

"Damn your soul!" he confessed. "But now I am no longer afraid. Soldier that I am, I love you—need you."

You have no idea how much I do need you, he thought, and he kissed her again.

"We have little food, but we have wine," he whispered in her ear. "There is death outside, but we are together inside, and tomorrow is in the hands of the gods."

"You speak well for a common clod," she approved. "Sit beside me."

They ate and drank for some time, and he noted she consumed enough wine for two large men.

"Do you like it here?" she asked.

"I think it heaven," he answered. "Only—well, my men should be paid something."

"Gold, eh?" She looked at him over the top of her goblet.

Adam shrugged. "You know how soldiers are—they like to gamble . . ."

"I love you, blond head. I'm going to tell you something no one except a member of this family knows—and something you won't like to hear."

He filled her cup again and passed it to her. "Yes?"

"There's no treasure. No little gold pieces. No silver coins—not anything you can—"

He was as sober as one thrown in a well. He grabbed her arm and jerked her from the couch. "Say that again!"

"Let go, you dirty dog! No, there's no gold. You know what the treasure is? It's a piece of wood!"

She reached for the cup and spilled wine over her chin and giggled. "All

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those great men preaching about taking care of me! I'd like to see their faces when they find out the truth!"

She could have seen what their faces would be like by looking at his; Adam stared at her with open mouth.

"How did this talk start?"

"Before any of us were born." She took a gulp of wine and tossed the goblet on the floor. "A hundred years ago, maybe more. When the great fighter of Moslems came back—that's my late husband's father's father's father. He set up here and was given a grant to protect the coast from raiders. And the Pope himself sent a piece of the True Cross as a testimony of good faith—"

He slapped her across the face and stood up. "I could have been in Italy by now, a great man!"

"Don't leave me, Adam."

"A piece of the Cross! What am I—a Bishop that I care for relics! I will probably get slain for a bit of wood."

She lay on the floor and rubbed her arm and pouted.

"You are like all the others. What do we care about treasure. Kiss me."

"The devil take you, you hussy!"

He all but ran from the room—she lay on the floor and belched loudly, then giggled. . .

Fletcher looked up from his work; his hands were stained with soot and he had a streak across his face. "God's name, master Adam, what has happened?"

"We have been betrayed," muttered Adam, bitterly. "That crazy she-devil!"

"The enemy is inside the castle!" and Fletcher turned pale.

"Oh, sit down, old man. Not yet. Worse—there's no gold."

Fletcher swallowed and slumped on his stool. "No gold," he echoed.

"No treasure. There's a piece of the Cross—a religious relic instead."

"'Tis a wondrous thing," said Fletcher piously. "Just the same, I'd rather have the other. I'd feel better hanging for gold."

"Do you know what this means? In case that noble-born dog out there can't be run off, or we fail to escape—if he ever gets his hand on us we'll be burned, hung, racked, and everything else he can think of!"

"Well," said Fletcher determinedly, "we just mustn't let him fall in our hands."

"Fall in *his* hands, fool! You are so confused you are gibbering!"

"Quite so," meekly agreed the old man. "Our hands."

"This is what comes of trying to be a noble. God help me, if I ever get out of this I'll stick to fighting as a simple soldier and leave matters of state to those born for it."

Fletcher slumped so low his shoulders all but touched his knees. "It's like a song the troubadours sing," he said miserably. "Only this time they began at the end and worked backwards."

Adam sat in silence for a time, again trying to fit the pieces of the puzzle together; he knew more now, who had killed old Jean and why. And bitterest news of all—that they would likely be killed for nothing more than a bit of wood.

He and his men were hard soldiers, for hire to the highest bidder, men who had seen too much of life and death to be excited over relics.

CHAPTER VI

THE SECRET WEAPON

BEFORE his men, however, Adam gave no sign that everything was not going according to plan; it was, but whether his plan or the Count's he didn't know.

The skeleton of the tower was finished now, and boardings were covering the frame. When that was finished he was certain there would be an assault. The count and a party of mounted men had made a careful study of the southern defenses and had erected palisades and shields within arrow shot of the battlements.

"It's plain enough what the French dog has in mind," decided Adam. "He will move his engines down here and try to sweep us from the walls with them, while that accursed tower is run up and he can place his men on the walls. With his numbers, once he gets on the walls, he can take the place."

"An admirable summary," agreed the scribe. "We must keep him from gaining the walls."

"I'm not so much interested in keeping him from the walls as I am in getting outside. Get back to your work and send Jonathan."

When the other came they went over everything in the castle. Food would last another ten days, twenty by stretching. There was enough in the way of war munitions, and the spirits of the men were still good, though the inaction of the past week was making some of them nervous. As long as they thought they had a good chance of winning they would be well, but once food was short, there might be a change.

"Let me know the minute there is the first sign of complaint."

Andre began a close siege now; his engines were hurling stones against the walls and within the castle all day long; at odd times during the night stones would crash against the walls. In addition to ruining their nerves, Andre attempted to kill them in other ways—rotten sides of beef were catapulted into the courtyard. Adam had to keep a guard all the time for this tainted food, as the chances for plague were too good. He had seen cities where the practice had caused half the populace to die of disease.

Fletcher rigged a giant crossbow and shot spears at the enemy; they were well protected by palisades but he kept them down and worried. Once, by luck, he caught a horseman and drove him from his mount, nailing him against the side of a wagon. There was an endless exchange of stones back and forth, but little damage was done.

Adam was not certain they would be able to keep the walls when the attack came. The palisades were on rollers, big clumsy sections of tree trunks, that could be moved into close range. Protected by them, the enemy crossbowmen could do damage, while not being too exposed. And there was the tower.

"That we must destroy. With his tower gone, there's nothing he can do, at least not for a while."

"A sortie with our numbers is hardly possible, Adam."

"Anything is possible, Jonathan. But yes, of course, you're right."

They were still sitting on the wall watching the enemy camp when there was a crash; flame and smoke shot from the tiny arrow-slit in the corner tower. Men looked up in wonder, began running for the tower stairs.

"It's that wizened old fool. He's found something!"

Fletcher had changed a bit, though still alive—his eyebrows and lashes were gone, a layer of black covering his face. There was a giant ringing of bells in his ears. Dazedly he noticed them come in the room and help him to his feet. The wall and ceiling near the bench were scorched, while the bench itself was shattered.

"It is burned, yet there is no fire," said an archer in wonder.

"What happened, Fletcher?"

The little scribe shook his head; the ringing continued. "Friar Bacon was right—'tis too dangerous a substance for use. In God's Name, how can it do this from such feeble materials!"

"Let someone else worry about that," interrupted Adam. "Can you do it again?"

"Aye," he looked in wonder at the room. "Behind this bench, mind you, I lay and lighted from a long taper. Oh, what a *noise!*"

"Show us," Adam directed, with scant regard for his wonder.

Fletcher cleared the room and began mixing charcoal and sulphur from small barrels in the alcove. "I tried every combination," he explained. "Every combination. Now I know as much as Bacon. What a chapter for my work!"

"Shut up, and get on with it."

At last he had a small pile of blackish powder on the splintered bench. "Watch."

He touched a candle to the pile. There was a hissing and an orange-green flame shot to the ceiling; the room was lighted; smoke billowed to the ceiling stones, choking and blinding them.

Jonathan coughed and jumped back; Adam shielded his eyes and turned instinctively. "What witchcraft is this?"

"It is the fire powder," explained Fletcher. "When like this it burns and flares, but hidden in a box, or under a

pot, it tears the bow to pieces, or sends the pot flying in the air. There is some demon there that must get to the air."

"It is a vile, evil-smelling stuff," said Adam. "God forgive me for using it, but it is our only chance."

"How can it be used in war?" asked Jonathan. "I grant it is loud and smells, but how can it be shot at the foe, or ignited?"

"Well, in pots, I wager," mused Fletcher. "It could be carried in jars and some manner of wick used to light it. That's it—place a candlewick in the powder and light it and throw the jar. It will explode and burn in the enemy ranks."

"God, first women and now this! I will be glad when we get to Italy and fight like Christians again." Adam shook his head in disgust.

"This might be a wondrous weapon—small wonder they looked on this Genoese captain as a great man."

"It didn't keep him from dying. The day this is better than a stout bow I want to be in my grave. You can't kill anyone with this stuff!" Adam pulled at his chin. "But we can scare them."

That night an archer lighted a torch and waved it from the south tower, not boldly, but as a man signaling from the castle might have used it. And the Count kept his men alerted all night and sat about in his armor in the damp air and cursed until morning. This happened for three nights, and he got so mad that they were afraid to take him his meals, and even the Bishop stopped jesting him.

The fourth night was like the others; again a signal light was displayed in the tower. Andre laughed and shook his fist.

"You English clown! Keep on with your torch. You must take me for a fool. Well, I'll not be bothered tonight by your pranks." And he went inside his tent and fell asleep.

This, it developed, was a considerable mistake on his part.

"ALWAYS we work at night," complained one of the serfs. "I believe these English are mad."

"It is strange," agreed his friend. "What can they do with all these jars?"

At this Fletcher, looking like some picked bird, with his burned lashes and beaked nose, shouted for them to hurry.

"I don't like being a soldier," complained the first.

"Maybe you would like a kick in the tail," said Fletcher. "Get in here with these pots and shut up."

"Yes, master."

Under Fletcher's direction they filled the earthen jars with the strange black powder; carefully he stopped the mouth with clay and molded it about the string-like wick hanging from the inside. Fletcher had tried his idea and found that the pots burst with a great roar and hurled fragments in all directions. Even as he worked he was composing a new section to his treatise.

"This will be a greater thing than the bow, or the sword, or even armor," he told the serf. "But you wouldn't understand. This will make the work of Vegitus seem like the mumblings of an amateur!"

"Yes, master. But I am still afraid of these things. I would go back to my field."

"Oh, shut up, or you'll go *under* your field."

He stacked the filled and finished jars along the bench and counted them and shooed the men out and had two archers stand guard with orders not to let anyone other than himself or Master Adam in the room. This done, he went down into the courtyard.

"Are you finished?" asked Jonathan.

"Aye, 'tis done."

"Good. Adam is about ready now."

The courtyard was lighted by a number of torches stuck in the wall brackets; in the flickering light dark shapes reached and blended with the wall shadows, and men walked into darkness and reappeared further on under the torches.

"They look like demons," shivered Fletcher. "I should hate to awaken and find them in my bed!"

"That is the idea—here's Adam."

"Are you ready?" Adam came up and gave Fletcher a pot of soot and grease.

"Oh, it stinks." And Fletcher choked and began rubbing the black mess into his skin.

All about him archers were grumbling

and laughing at one another and running under the torches to see their friends. They daubed one another, rubbing the substance into mouth and ears, sticking their fingers in one another's eyes and having a great time, until their turn came. Face, hands, neck, all exposed parts were covered. When they finished they resembled a troop of Moors.

"Remember my words," Adam told them. "You are black—strike everything white. The word is 'Allah'—this will make them think us Saracen raiders and may throw them off on the return. We *must* destroy the tower and as much as possible of their wagons and food. You are more interested in wagons than in men. Kill all you can, but *no* plunder. If we win we will have their camp. If they win, we will have small need for earthly goods."

At his command the leaders of the groups stood and told again what they were to do.

"I am to take my men and burn the tower."

"We are to slip into the main camp and set the jar in the fire and when it explodes cut down all the men we can and then go north and come back to the barbican gate. The signal there will be 'St. George.' "

"When we hear the fight in the main camp, we wait to see if anyone goes over, and when they do we slip in and burn the camp and tower."

"My men are to burn the wagons and let loose the animals."

"My ten men are to wait in the darkness between the tower camp and the wagons and shoot down any men running between, then cover the retreat of the main group."

"Remember—don't be frightened of the fire pots. Don't get involved in a big fight. Try to strike men asleep, then run. If you are cut off, don't worry. The lower sally port on the river will be open, and you can come in for the next three nights, if cut off tonight. Hide in the woods and come in."

AT ABOUT the hour of midnight they picked up their equipment and fell into their groups. Adam checked each man for weight and equipment. Nothing was carried that was not light. No helmets were worn, and only leather jerkins were used for protection. The ten to watch the middle trail and cover the retreat carried a bow and full quivers, the rest had a sword, or axes, a bow and six arrows stuck in their belts. Their clothing was dark and they made a ghostly scene as they filed into the keep and vanished down the stairs leading to the dungeon and the river sally port.

Fletcher stumbled along in the middle of the main group, a large box clutched to his breast. Inside, hidden from view was a bed of coals; from time to time he blew into tiny holes and checked to see the resulting glow.

One by one they emerged from the tiny port, helped themselves down the face of the cliff by the use of ropes and the long-forgotten steps cut in the rock. As each man reached the bottom, Adam counted him off into his correct group, which, when filled, vanished down the stream.

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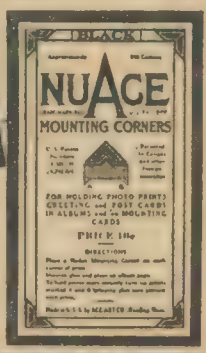

Ace Art Company Reading, Massachusetts

"What a night," whispered Fletcher. "Like the inside of a cow."

"Are the coals still alight?"

"Aye—what a present for the Count," and he giggled.

Back in the castle Jonathan looked from the river wall as long as he could, but it was too dark. Once or twice he heard a man stumble and a whispered command, but after a time there was only silence. He walked around the wall circuit to the east towers. There was little enough left to defend the castle—ten archers, the serfs and the few men of the original watch, some twenty men, and only the archers reliable.

Two archers and a party of serfs were placed in each tower and the remainder in the barbican. The Genoese crossbows and bolts were divided—piled in the towers. Under the direction of the archers the other men wound and loaded the bows and placed them in readiness.

The moon had long since vanished under the clouds, and the black-faced, dark-clad attackers cast no shadows as they picked their way from the river bed and came out on the plain below the castle. Behind them the castle bulk was outlined dimly against the lighter sky; with this as a guide they began moving to their positions.

Adam had cautioned them under pain of death against talking, and the eerie cast of the night and the ghostly appearance of the silhouettes about them held their tongues in a vise. Even when an unseen root tripped one and sprawled him on the ground, there was no cursing. It was as if all knew any sound would unleash the night demons and destroy them. For what seemed like hours the first party waited outside the palisaded camp guarding the tower. Slowly they crept in and lay hidden in the bottomless shadows of the shields. It was so black the archers could not even see the men around them.

Adam and Fletcher and the bulk of the Englishmen had long since vanished in the darkness. For their part, the ten men midway between the camps thought they had been waiting for most of the night. The little scribe knew that he could walk no longer; his legs had walked over half of Provence, and the box of coals and the pot tied to his waist were as heavy as a tun of Malmsy wine.

Then the man ahead of him stopped; the weary Fletcher bumped into him, grunted. Man after man came up and was stopped by a touch. Suddenly a clang of metal made a great sound in the night; men stopped breathing and sank down on the ground.

"It was a guard," whispered Adam, appearing at Fletcher's side. "The fool had on a helmet with an iron neck protector."

Adam touched the man beside him, and the word was passed by touch down the column. They crept on. Now the fires of the camp could be seen; they moved almost on the ground. A number of guards were standing about, resting on their spears, half asleep in the early morning hush. Certain of the archers crawled forward and slipped arrows from their belts, made ready. Fletcher saw the nearest one rise to his feet. He gave a little shiver of excitement and blew in his box and said a silent prayer.

ONLY one guard failed to go down on the first arrow flight; he was wearing an iron cuirass, and the shaft glanced off the curved metal and struck in a tent. The sentry staggered from the blow and shouted a warning, but two archers had turned and shot him in the groin and the face. Before he could make too much noise, the man nearest him cut his throat.

One of the archers snatched up his spear and thrust it through an inquisitive soldier in a tent. A man rolled over, asked a question, had his head split with an axe. There was no alarm as yet, and the archers ran through the camp, slashing and stabbing everything that moved.

Fletcher and the three men with him ran for the fires; at his signal the first archer placed his pot in the fire, and they ran. Almost at the same moment fire shot into the night. The crash rolled men from slumber and brought them shaking and tumbling into the present. The campfire had been blown all over the sky; embers rained down and set fire to tents and wagon covers.

The enemy camp was like a disturbed anthill.

Fletcher hid behind a wagon and blew on his box of coals and tugged loose his pot and stuck the wick into the fire. When the flame caught he tossed the pot into the crowd before him. A Genoese bowman saw the smoldering pot, but thought it part of the fire about him. He had a piece of crockery blown through his stomach without ever knowing what had happened.

For a moment a great puff of fire, like a brilliant orange-green tent, filled the space between two wagons. Blinded and then choked by the smoke, the dazed troops were cut down by two archers. Slashing to all sides, the Englishmen ran through the smoke and vanished on the far side of the camp.

Everyone was an enemy to the Englishmen, while the Count's men were not certain what was happening. Awakened from sleep by mighty claps of thunder, they found fire falling from the sky, great lightning flashes that burned and killed men. In and out of the confusion, archers ran and cut down everything in their way, or hid behind the wagons and shot their arrows into the milling men.

There was another belch of fire, and a huge iron cook pail sailed into the air and crushed a tent. A number of fires were raging now, for the archers were applying brands to everything that was cloth or wood.

Last to reach their assigned position, the men to attack the animal guards found their enemy alerted, but confused. There was a tangle of men; then the horses, nervous and already frightened by the noise and fires, broke loose and ran through the melee.

At full gallop, chased by the English, the now completely wild animals tore down tents, crushed men, scattered everything in their way and added the final note of ruin. Whatever chances the French and Genoese had of offering an effective resistance was beaten into the ground by this final blow.

Looking over his shoulder Fletcher saw a great pillar of flame and smoke from the palisaded camp. Almost at the same instant a man bumped into him and knocked him to the ground. He was a large man dressed in his shirt and drawers and he screamed commands which no one heard in the confusion.

A hunting horn blew twice, and the man stopped. "English!" he shouted. "Cut them off at the castle!"

A retainer was following him with a helmet and shouted at the men. "Do as my lord says!"

"St. George and the dragon," muttered Fletcher.

And he grasped his box by the straps, swung and bashed the man across the back of the head.

"You dog, you have killed the Count," gasped the squire. Drawing his dagger, he grabbed Fletcher by the jerkin front.

"Beware of the magic flame!" screamed the frightened scribe. He shook the box and a coal fell out.

"Witchcraft or not, I'll—"

He had waited too long; an archer hit him with an axe.

"Master Fletcher, are you safe?"

"This is my last combat," vowed Fletcher. "From this day on I write the accounts of the company only. Help me with this hulk—it's worth a pretty farthing, I wager."

The horn was braying again, further away in the night; the archer tugged the body upright and dropped it across one shoulder.

"Hurry, master Fletcher," and he staggered away from the fight.

CHAPTER VII

TREASURE BEYOND PRICE

ADAM sat on the south battlements and watched the charred hulk of the ruined tower; one long timber poked a blackened finger at the sky, and there was a litter of still smoking embers in a heap about the base.

"That settles it," he said with satisfaction.

The view to the east was just as satisfactory. The main camp was still burning, and men ran about and tried to drag the wagons that were as yet untouched to a place of safety. A few men rode horses in the open land chasing what was left of the animals, but it was plain that most of them had vanished in the woods.

As it became lighter he could see more and more: there was no doubt about the success of the raid. The Count had been handed something to occupy his time for days to come. Adam had no idea of the number of men slain, but there must be many a still body in the two camps. For his part, Fletcher and a dozen archers were missing, a loss he could afford far less than the Count to lose a hundred men.

A horn sounded from the river wall, and he looked across the courtyard, where a sentry was waving to attract his attention.

"Some of our people," suggested Jonathan.

"God grant it is Fletcher."

They ran along the wall top, through the corner tower and around the angle of the wall to where the sentry pointed. Far below were four men, picking their way along the trail by the river. They walked in pairs. Adam noted, and he remarked upon it to Jonathan.

"Anything strange about that?"

"Aye," replied Jonathan. "That one in front seems to be a prisoner, and the one behind is being helped—"

"Then it's Fletcher," said Adam. "Let's get down to the sally port."

It was necessary to drop a rope and haul Fletcher to the sally port in the foot of the wall. Stained with soot and grease, he looked more than ever like some small demon, a very tired, ragged demon.

"Thank God you are back," and Adam gave him a hug.

"Oh, Adam, what I have suffered," moaned the other. "There are two groups of people—sensible folk and soldiers!"

"Just so you are safe—what's this?"

The prisoner came through the door and stood in the dim light and looked about him scornfully; Fletcher giggled suddenly. "He's mad at me," he said, pointing to the man.

"St. George! Don't tell me *you* caught a prisoner?"

"What's so strange about that?" bristled Fletcher. "And do you know just *who* he is?"

"Oh, stop this foolishness," broke in the man. "I am Andre, Count of Provence. Let me send a message, so I can be ransomed and get out of this miserable place."

"Andre of Provence," said Adam. "Well, not so fast now, my great lord. We should get to know one another better."

For a moment the two men looked at one another, one curiously, one contemptuously.

"So, you are the Free Company rascal who would keep me from my holdings."

"So far, Your Worship, we haven't done too badly."

"You speak well anyway," admitted Andre.

Adam grinned. "I even *write* a little. Do you?"

"Bah," grunted Andre. "It is for clerics and clerks—why, you insolent scum!"

Shrugging, Adam called a guard. "He doesn't wish to know how his friends betrayed him—"

"What foolishness is this?"

"No foolishness. You have been tricked and betrayed at every turn—by the Genoese, your own people; the Bishop himself was to take this place for the Church."

"I don't believe it."

"Take him upstairs and place him in one of the tower chambers under guard."

In the guardroom and the courtyard, about the well, archers were scrubbing the grime from their faces; others stretched out in the warm sun and slept. There was an air of quiet and rest; in the stillness the buzzing of a fly sounded as loud as the tapping of a drum.

Up in the keep, Adam was writing a letter to his friend the Bishop, which shortly was hurled from the mangonel; they watched the streamer-tailed package fly through the air, two arrow lengths of silk from the Count's shirt serving as an eye-catcher. A soldier picked up the weighted package and carried it into the camp.

"We should have a caller soon," said Fletcher.

"Aye, he will be here, with honey in his mouth and like as not leave the Count to be hung. I don't trust that one."

"He doesn't trust himself either, Jonathan."

IT WAS evident that His Holiness had hurried, and also evident that his sleep had been disturbed the night before: a large bruise closed one eye and his chin was cut to the bone. The Lord Bishop was in a sour mood.

"You treacherous dog!" he shouted at Adam. "What have you done with Andre?"

"Come in, Your Worship, and let us talk."

The Bishop had nothing to say as they climbed the stairs and even a goblet of wine failed to bring him out of his surly mood.

"I have been thinking of what you said, Father—about peace and the rest."

The Bishop cocked a quizzical eye and took a gulp from his flagon. "Humph!"

"I am just a poor wandering soldier with a company of lads depending on me for support. What do I know about the right and wrong of this struggle—this is for noble minds, not a miserable Free Company captain."

"Quite so, my son." The other began taking interest, a shrewd look on his face.

"We were forced to protect ourselves, and because of this many fine lads were slain. But now I wish to leave this place, even though we have a secret that can burn the world. All I want is peace—what do I care for the castle treasure?" Adam shrugged and poured himself a flagon of wine. "Umm," he smacked his lips. "I don't give a farthing for it."

"Beware of material things, my son," and the Bishop's eyes all but popped from his head as he spoke.

"That is so, Holy One, how true. This treasure, what use have I and my poor men for this. It should be given to the Church—say to you, as a representative."

"My son, this is a course you will never regret."

"I am sure of that, Father. So sure that I am willing to make a sacrifice and ask only a thousand crowns!"

His Holiness spewed wine over the table and dropped his flagon to the stones. "A thousand crowns!"

"Don't you think a piece of the true Cross is worth that?"

"True Cross!" The Bishop poured another flagon of wine and stared at Adam.

"A thousand pieces is not much," continued Adam. "I am not greedy. The Count's ransom and your gift, combined with the price of the treasure, will enable us to travel in comfort."

"*My* gift?"

"Aye, for sparing your life."

"I'll see you on the rack first—"

"In time, maybe, not now. I doubt if even the captive Pope at Avignon will like the thought of his Bishop's dealing in murder."

The other sat there and fingered his goblet; for the first time he seemed neither boastful or confident.

"I thought you a fool," he confided, "when all the time I was the simpleton. By laughing at the things I taught I am brought to ruin—by a treasure beyond price, which I believed to be gold."

"The mills of the gods grind slow—" began Fletcher piously.

"Aye, and fine," replied the Bishop. Then, some of his old feeling returned. "Too bad you couldn't have been born a noble," he said to Adam. "What a waste of talent."

There was one thing else Adam had to do. Nodding to the guard, he opened Jeanne's door and walked inside.

"You dirty English dog!" she called and threw a platter at him. "Why have you kept me locked up here?"

Taking her in his arms he kissed her tenderly. "You must listen to me, my love," he whispered in her ear, and he kissed her on the neck, just between the swelling of her breasts and held her close.

"Damn you, why do you stay away so long?" She held him and kissed his lips.

"Listen, my life, and understand."

"You seem like a different man, Adam—what is the matter?"

"I love you, my love, but you must listen. I am a poor, wretched soldier. You must have someone in your station—oh, a count at the least—"

She jerked away. "What are you saying, you tail-end of a mule?"

"You see. It could never be. I am going away, probably to languish and die of a broken heart, but you will not have a commoner on your hands. Farewell, my love."

Before she could say more, he had gone. In the hallway Adam whistled in relief and listened to the crash of silver vessels against the oak planking.

"I wish to punish the fellow for his threats, but this is almost too much. Oh, well, war is hard." He turned to one of the guards. "See that the Count is quartered in there with her."

"The Count?" asked the man. "Well, Master Adam, I thought she was—er—"

"Stop thinking and do as I say."

THERE were still a half thousand men in and around the Count's camp, and Adam wasted no time on display. Despite the fact that he had the worthy Bishop trussed inside a wagon as a hostage, he moved as fast as possible. His men were loaded in the wagons, mounted on all form of animals, leaving only the strongest to walk.

Bows were out and arrows at hand, for none knew what to expect. The Count had sent a message, which may or may not have been honored, but Adam knew that at the first sign of an attack there would be one less bishop to console the world.

And His Holiness knew this as well, for a stolid archer sat beside him in the wagon and hefted an axe in his hands. There were signs of curiosity, but no movement to stop the wagons, and the caravan moved at a brisk pace south of the walls, towards the sea road to Marseilles.

"I think we will get clear, Adam."

"It looks like they have had enough."

Fletcher stuck his head from the wagon. "It is so with these mercenaries—what do they care as long as they are paid."

"Well, they won't be paid so well now—not with our friend the Count coughing his soul away on a ransom."

Adam laughed and slapped his thigh. "He has a treasure beyond price now."

"Aye," giggled Fletcher. "*There* he will get his money in full—what a pair! They are going to unite with the other nobles against the Crown and abolish the States General and do away with the salt tax."

"And how are they going to do that?"

"With my secret weapon—the witchcraft in the fire. Why else would he give me an extra hundred pieces of silver?"

Adam reigned in his horse. "You simpleton!"

Fletcher giggled. "Don't get excited, master. All he has is a score of pots full of dirt."

The castle was now only a silhouette on the bluff, the camp lost against the woods. Adam gave a last look and signalled for the animals to slow to a walk.

"So ends that. I had fears it would not finish so well."

"Oh, so goes life," philosophized Fletcher. "We live and show a profit. Italy will be even better, I wager."

"I'll be a cautious man in Italy," vowed Adam. "*No* affairs of state—we will be soldiers, not nobles. And no woman higher in station than a scullery wench!"

"Unless," suggested the old scribe, "she is young and lovely?"

"Unless," agreed Adam, "she is young and lovely."

DONKEY CAMP

By TOM W. BLACKBURN

The fighting lasted a long time, and it was grim work.

THERE was a moderate wind, the usual downslope draft of the late afternoon hours. It pressed fitfully at the puff of foliage left at the top of the trimmed, untopped hundred-and-ninety-foot *ponderosa*. It made the slim, tapered shaft of the great trunk bend astonishingly. It felt fresh against Steve Kerrigan's face where he clung at about a hundred and forty feet, momentarily brushing the fever of fatigue from his cheeks.

He was aware of the stale, chafing feeling of clothing worn continuously through sixty hours of unremitting labor. The calves of both legs were cramped under the constant strain of the spiked

ILLUSTRATED BY EVERETT RAYMOND KINSTLER

climbers strapped to the heels of his boots. Fatigue centered in the small of his back where his wide rigger's belt passed across it, supporting his body by the climber's line which passed around the trunk in front of him with either end anchored to the belt. Added to the burden were the weight of the one-man saw and the double-bitted axe hanging by their own ten-foot lanyards from hooks on the back of the belt.

A hundred and forty feet below him, piled about the base of the great jackpine, were the trimmed branches he had lopped off as he worked his way up to topping level. A green mound which was never directly below him, but to one side or another in a constantly changing, somewhat circular pendulum movement as the wind worked on the top of the tree. A hundred yards east of the base of the jackpine, where three more virgin sticks provided ample anchorage, men of Kerrigan's crew were spiking and lashing down the bed of his donkey-rig—boiler, engine, and winch. Westward, in a narrow, straight path reaching deep into a fine stand of virgin timber, fellers and roustabouts were at work clearing a skid-road. One of the first sticks taken down here had been trimmed and fitted with a butt-plate and swivel, ready to be swung into place as a boom on the spar-tree when Steve had topped it.

On the south edge of the working clearing, where it would be within radius of this boom when it was swung, was the curious jack-straw heap of scantlings of the loading chute edging the flume. Beyond this, but half-complete and neglected now for the moment, were the skeletons of the cookshack and bunkhouse which comprised the balance of the camp. Everywhere—in the underbrush still left untouched in the clearing, the partially completed buildings, the raw, axe-shaped form of the timbers used in construction, there was evidence of haste. Haste was imperative here.

ACROSS the ridge, working into the same timber stand, Ben Gerson was building a camp and driving his crew as mercilessly as Kerrigan was driving his own. The first of the two outfits to drop a commercial stick into the water behind the holding boom on the Tonnere River would have the Mackay contract for this timber lease, the use of both camps, and a chance at a hundred thousand dollars in profit. A curious way to make a contract bid, but old John Mackay was a timberman. His business was getting out sticks. And this was his way of insuring he got the best man on any tract he opened up.

Far below Kerrigan a red beard tilted skyward and a great voice boomed upward in the signal for which Kerrigan had been waiting. Alex Jorgenson, Steve's woods-boss, had warned the crew and moved the two double spans of mules the fellers were using out of the way.

"All clear!"

Kerrigan clamped his teeth against his weariness and hauled his saw up to him by its lanyard. The setting of a limber six-foot crosscut at the proper mark and driving it through heartwood in midair at the close quarters enforced by the climber's line was not a trick a man learned in a day. Some did not learn it at all. Some did not learn it well enough. There were hazards in the topping of a spar tree. Mishandling of a saw was one. Some high riggers lived very short lives.

Although the rest of the crew remained clear below, Kerrigan saw Jorgenson was standing in close to the base of the trunk, his head uptilted earnestly, and that all of the others had stopped work to watch. He understood.

There was fascination in the topping of a tree more than a hundred feet above the ground. To those who had never before seen it done, it seemed a feat of extraordinary daring. But these were timber hogs below and the sight of a high-rigger at work was no more curious to them than the upward drift of smoke from a donkey-engine boiler. Steve knew the interest of his crew now was not in him but in the *ponderosa* through which he was driving his saw.

The close-packed, tough graininess of a Douglas fir was ideal for a spar although milled and kiln-dried lumber from the same tree would have a nasty reputation among carpenters for its tendency to split. While it was green and

still standing on its own roots, a fir was remarkably tough. A high cut on such a stick usually broke cleanly. A *ponderosa*, however, was more treacherous. Its open grain, with patchy streaks of toughness through it and its lack of interbinding of fiber made it hard to bring down without a split.

And a split was of course the fear of all high-riggers. A puff of wind from the wrong direction or of the wrong intensity. A snapping of heart-fiber before the saw was quite deep enough into the stick. And as the top went over, a split running far below the rigger's position. The column of the trunk wedged apart by the split until the slack of the climber's line was taken up and the rigger, himself, was cut in two by the broad belt to which the ends of the line were fastened.

In position on the windward side of the tree, Kerrigan began wiping the saw-edge into the spar. The great, ragged teeth tore out coarse, sweet, sap-wet chunks as the steel bit deep into living wood. Swinging on the heel-spikes of his climbers with a sawyer's rhythm, he drove the saw with the weight of his body more than with the muscles of his arms and shoulders.

Below, Jorgenson's red-bearded face remained uptilted. And in spite of the knowledge of the necessity for unrelenting haste in every man, the idle crew remained idle. This was a critical point and every man knew it. If there was trouble in topping this spar, Ben Gerson's crew would easily be first in getting timber into the boom on the Tonnere. Ben Gerson would have won the Mackay contract. And Steve Kerrigan, out the expense of rigging this camp, would be wiped out as a contractor.

Twenty strokes with the saw—forty-sixty—carefully honed and set steel driven deep. Under the pressure of the wind the now slightly weakened spar began to bend a little more sharply at Kerrigan's position, closing the cut he had made and clamping the steel he was making it with. Waiting for a pause in the faint gustiness of the wind, Kerrigan freed the saw, lowered it to the end of its lanyard, and leaning close to the trunk of the tree, shifted the climber's line passing from his belt around the spar.

Surely, but unhurriedly, he freed one heel-spike, reset it, and freed the other, edging as far around toward the opposite side of the tree as the slack in the shifted climber's line permitted. Again he shifted the line to repeat the process. In three shifts he was on the windward side of the trunk, a little lower than he had been before so that when he raised the saw and set it against the spar at a point slightly above the cut he had made on the opposite side, the saw was nearly over his head.

This was awkward and more difficult work, heavily taxing upon a body already weary with too much labor. Sharp as the honing and set of the saw were and as easily as a green *ponderosa* cut, it seemed to take an interminable time even to set the edge. Working with the saw so high above him, it was difficult to use the weight of his body, now. Sweat broke out on Kerrigan as he whipped the blade back and forth.

As a big stick will do to the man who is

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bringing it down, the *ponderosa* presently began to talk to Kerrigan. Little shudders, reaching up his legs from his spiked heels. A peculiar resiliency in the wind which had not been noticeable before. An erratic acceleration in the circular pendulum sweep of the trunk. Small, sharp, explosive sounds within the wood itself as internal fibers began to snap under the increasing strain. Sounds he heard above the whistling snore of the saw. Each of these things magnifying itself with each stroke of the saw.

SUDDENLY a shudder more pronounced than the rest, sufficiently violent to fling Steve hard against the restraint of his belt and the climber's line. The rupturing explosions within the trunk became a rising crescendo—almost a roar. One more stroke with the saw after this, then a series of swift, practised movements in which there could be no fumble. A wrench which freed the blade above him. A twist aside, throwing all of his weight on one heel-spike to permit the falling saw to drop past him. A sharp, half-painful tug on his belt as it reached the end of its lanyard and was checked. A quick hitch about his hand with the free end of the climber's rope while the fingers of his other hand snapped the release of the patented friction clutch which anchored the running end of the line to his belt, so that if necessary he could pay out yards of the manila through it in an instant.

And far below, Jorgenson's great voice reaching upward and outward in the primordial call of working woodsmen:

"Timber—!"

Only then did Kerrigan look upward to gauge the fall of the partially severed top and the effectiveness of the cuts he had made.

Due far more to the placements of his saw cuts than to the pressure of the wind, the fifty or sixty foot tower of the untrimmed top leaned with slowly accelerating speed down-wind. As it did so the most peculiar phenomenon of a topping operation became apparent. It was as though there was a pivot about halfway up the top section on which the top was turning, so that as the tip swung over further in the beginning of its fall, the butt—represented by Kerrigan's saw cuts—moved nearly an equal distance in the opposite direction, bending the whole long column of the spar away from the direction of the top's fall.

Gripping his climber's line and release catch tightly, Kerrigan was aware that he was swinging far out in the direction of the unfinished camp buildings. He didn't need to look down to know this. His eyes were fastened on the bole of the tree a scant foot from his face. The tearing rupture of uncut fibers in the trunk rose in pitch until the sound seemed to be penetrating the nerves of his body.

Then came the critical instant in which the falling top was at right angles with the trunk from which it had been severed. The butt broke free and canted upward, stinging Kerrigan's face with a shower of torn bark, and the top was free, falling tip-foremost toward the ground below. It was a clean break. There was no split. With a clenching motion of his hand, Kerrigan snapped the release of the belt-clutch fastening his climber's line to his belt closed again. As he did so the now-topped spar, relieved of the falling motion of its top portion, started a whip-like return to a vertical position.

Kerrigan swayed with the reversal of direction. Accelerating wind whistled in his face as the spar swung back to vertical and bent far in the other direction with its own momentum. Half-a-dozen times it snapped back and forth with only a slight deceleration each time in the distance of its travel or the springy violence of its motion. Then Kerrigan caught the rhythm of the movement and it didn't disturb him further.

He started walking unhurriedly down the spur on his heel-spikes, pausing every half-dozen feet to lean forward and shake the tree-encircling climbing line down even with him. In ten minutes he was on the ground.

The crews were back at work. A teamster who doubled at the forge when there was iron work to be done was busy hammering a steel collar into the proper size to encircle the fallen top at the butt where Kerrigan had made his cut. It

would also fit the tip of the topped spar. Carried up into position by a pair of cable riggers, it would be clamped in place. Guy-cables would be fastened to some of the heavy hasps welded to it. To the biggest of these would be fastened the tackle-fall by which the donkey engineer would control the boom to be fitted at the base of the spar and consequently the logs brought down the skid-road from the heart of the tract to be worked on this contract. Logs snaked out by winch at the end of a long cable and hoisted by means of spar and boom onto the loading chute beside the flume.

Jorgenson approached Steve.

"Cleanest jackpine cut I ever seen, Boss," he said.

Kerrigan grinned weary appreciation. Alex had seen a good many trees topped and he wasn't a man who thought praise was cheap.

"The donkey's about rigged," Jorgenson went on. "We'll have steam in half an hour. Twice that'll see the rigging done, it looks like. And the only trick left is to get the logs to ride the flume. I had a boy over it twice before noon. Holding water all the way. And the grade you run for it means the sticks will go down it to the Tonnere faster'n if they was on rails. You was smart, boy, in giving the boys shares on this contract if we get it. I never seen a woods crew turn out work like this bunch. You got old John Mackay in your pocket!"

KERRIGAN shook his head wearily. "If we were working against anybody but Gerson, maybe yes. But that son cuts timber some funny ways, Alex. It strike you funny that Mackay's surveyor located our camp where we had to top a *ponderosa* and clear hell's half-acre of brush to get a skid-road lined out while Gerson's boys get a little ravine all made to order for skidding and a lightning snag already topped sitting just right for a usable spar?"

"You mean the Old Man would be party to getting you to throw up a camp here in a try at a contract you couldn't win?" Jorgenson protested.

"Not Mackay. He's got too damned many irons in the fire and too much to think about to even see details like that. But a man on his payroll don't get rich till he can prove he can improve Mackay's timber production. A surveyor of his might be bought reasonable."

"That sounds like a Gerson trick, all right," Jorgenson agreed. "But if he pulled it, it was money pounded into a rat-hole, Steve. I had the cookhouse flunky over the ridge an hour ago. He just came back. Ben's got troubles. His lightning snag pulled over when he was cinching up the guys. Now he's got to put up a cut spar and build a heavy enough deadman to anchor it on. Take him the rest of the day and all night, best he can do. I tell you the contract's in your pocket. There's a bottle under my pillow over there in the shack. Bite yourself off a piece of it and flop. You need a snooze. When we get the skid line onto the first stick, I'll wake you so you can see her come down."

Kerrigan nodded and moved away from his woods boss. The donkey fireman was after steam in his boiler. He had fed so many pine knots into the firebox that a bright column of flame stood up through all three levels of the spark-arresters on its stack as though there was a forced draft under the firebox grates. The donkey engineer was going over the valves and controls of his winch again with a railroad man's long-spouted oilcan, making sure his engine would give him the smoothest kind of operation. The mule-skinner whose job it was to return the free end of the skid-line to the far end of the road where timber would be dropping each time a log was dragged down had his mule spans in harness and ready to go.

Four roustabouts who would see to the lining up of the incoming logs on the loading chute when the skid brought them down from the felling crew, and who would spill them into the rushing white water of the flume, had stacked their big, oversize canthooks against the chute in readiness. Meanwhile they were steadily at work with brush-hooks on the small-growth litter which still tangled a good portion of the working clearing. Up in the timber, itself, sounded the peculiar, bell-like strike of razor-edged carbon steel against green standing wood as

axemen in the felling crew worked on jackpines which would mill out ten thousand board feet of lumber per tree for old John Mackay's huge lumber company.

Alex was right. This was a timber man's crew. Bringing down big sticks had never been a business of boss and employees, but of woodsmen, working together to a common purpose. Alex, however, did not fully understand the shares Steve had offered the men who had come into this tract with him. These shares were not a bribe to buy back-breaking work from the boys. Every man of them would have sweat as hard for common pay if he liked his boss and the camp. But a Mackay contract was a big thing. With so much potential profit, a man could afford to share it. And Steve Kerrigan, who had had his share of working for others, believed that those who cut the timber should share in the eventual profits from it.

There was another aspect. Ben Gerson, an outlander who had come into the hills with a new idea as to how contracts should be won and timber cut, was behind it. A small, shrewd, conniving man, he had become in a pair of seasons one of the biggest operators in the hills. There was dark talk as to his methods, but nothing upon which a man could put his finger. It was said in the camps and even in the mills that the men Gerson hired knew more about the knuckles of their fists than they did about the bits of an axe.

It was said—and facts bore the statement out—that a hill man had no chance against Gerson. The traditions and the legends of the woods meant nothing to the man. Sweating out big sticks was only a business to him, from which a profit should be made. He cut the corners and tripped an opponent where he could. He was dangerous. And it was Kerrigan's conviction that the natural hazards of lumbering were sufficient for a timberjack to face for the pay he received. If he had also to stand against an operator like Gerson, there should be more for him in the end. This had much to do with the shares Kerrigan had offered his own boys, just as the fact he would be bidding against Gerson on this tract had something to do with his accepting John Mackay's invitation to this pecular kind of competitive bidding.

The business of the hills had been long done in a certain way by a certain breed of men. In all of this time a growing nation had gotten from the hills the mill-stuff it needed for its building without any one single man enriching himself at the expense of either the market or his employees. Timbering had been a clean business, carried on in high, clean country, by men who liked the country and the work and the constant challenge of big labors, for no commercial stick came down, even in the luckiest camp, without its own problems and its own trickery, so that a man learned to live lightly on his feet, like a cat. It was a trade to which big men who disliked cities and paper-cluttered offices and business suits could turn. There was no place in it for shrewdness and manipulating skills and the close dealings of the pavements. There was no place in it for men like Gerson.

Kerrigan had decided on this race for Mackay's contract for this reason as much as because there was a hundred thousand dollars to be made if his crew dropped the first stick behind the boom on the Tonnere.

IGNORING Alex's suggestion that he turn in for a snooze, Kerrigan crossed the working clearing and moved down the flume a hundred feet below the loading platform to check a slip-joint in the planking there which had leaked heavily when water was first turned into the big wooden trough. A log flume was a tough proposition. Built of rough-milled lumber it had to be not only stout enough to carry a four-foot head of water running at perhaps a twenty-mile rate, but it had to stand the hammering of sticks being floated on the water down to the big river. Joints had to be flexible enough to permit stringing the flume out at a proper grade, following the contour of the hills, but they had also to be reasonably waterproof and strong enough to bear the strain of the load they were to carry.

In some camps moving their stuff by

flume, caulk-booted daredevils, armed with stout peaveys, rode every third or fourth log to prevent momentary jams in the flume and reduce the punishment it received. Kerrigan didn't hold with this practice. Another case of piling the risks facing his men higher than they needed to be. He had built his flume stoutly. It would have to absorb its own punishment.

The joint he had moved down to check, having become soaked with water, had swollen snugly tight. Nodding to himself, he turned back to the camp. As he did so, a man he had been for three days expecting to see stepped from the brush beyond the flume and advanced warily toward him. Kerrigan saw movement in the cover the man had quit and he knew others waited there out of sight, watchful and primed. Steve halted.

"Hello, Gerson," he said without friendliness.

The small man nodded brightly and almost fawningly. "Got a minute or two, Kerrigan?" he asked. Steve nodded. "I run into a little trouble," Gerson went on. "Probably you've heard. Got to rig a new spar for my boom and my riggers are slow as hell."

"Might try buying a piece of the chore yourself," Kerrigan said bluntly. "In the woods a man'll work better with a boss than for him."

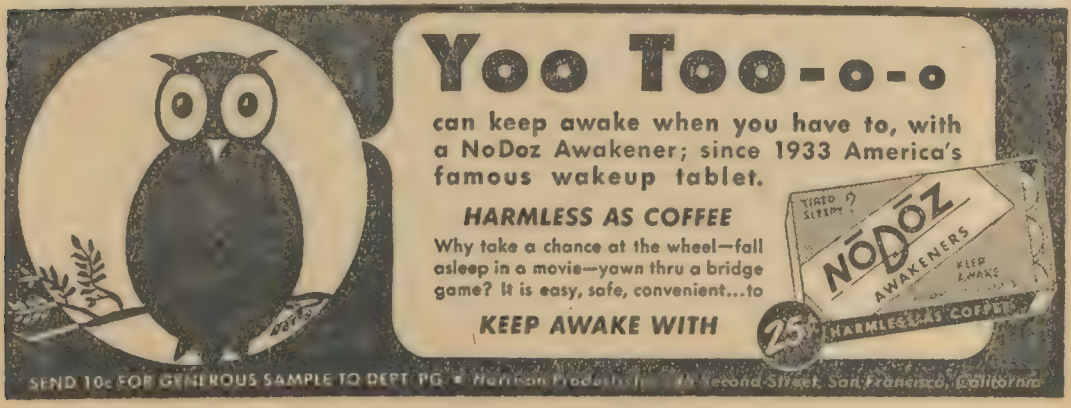
"The hell with the woods," Gerson grinned. "I watched you drop that top. None of that for me. I make my profit with my head, not my hands. And I got a suggestion that'll make you a little without turning a hand. It's time you tried it. A man has got to get ahead in a business or he's got to get out of it. They tell me you've spent your life in the woods. What's it got you, so far?"

"Nothing I can spend, if that's the point you're making," Steve said shortly. "Get on with it."

"I thought I scared off anybody that might bid against me on this Mackay contract," Gerson said. "Bought a couple of the bigger operators, knowing they'd have their hands full on jobs as big as this, already, and that a little profit would look better to them than another contract. I didn't figure on you. I didn't figure Mackay'd advance you the little cash you needed for gear here or that you'd talk some of the best crewmen on the river into going in with you on shares when you didn't have money to offer them. A mistake, apparently. But it wouldn't have worried me if that damned snag-spar had broken loose from its roots, setting me back too far to get my first stick down ahead of you, even if I do have double your crew and a better working clearing. Still, it was a mistake and I'm willing to pay for it."

"You're apt to—with a broken nose!" Kerrigan growled.

"You take it easy," Gerson warned. "I got a boy with a rifle nailed to your chest, back there in the brush. You stand still and listen. I don't take chances in anything. You keep yourself and your boys busy here doing nothing till I've got my first stick down to the Tonnere and I'll pay all your expenses here, plus the same amount again to split up any way you see fit among yourself and your boys. I don't know an easier way to make three thousand dollars."


Yoo Too-o-o
can keep awake when you have to, with a NoDoz Awakener; since 1933 America's famous wakeup tablet.
HARMLESS AS COFFEE
Why take a chance at the wheel—fall asleep in a movie—yawn thru a bridge game? It is easy, safe, convenient...to
KEEP AWAKE WITH
NODOZ
AWAKENERS
25
SEND 10c FOR GENEROUS SAMPLE TO DEPT. PG

"Listen," Steve said quietly. "This is one of the things I've learned in the woods. I don't give a damn whether I make a profit here or not. Old John Mackay wants a competitive bid and proof the winner can cut timber. That's what he is going to get from me. If I lose, it'll be because a better woods-boss beat me. But that's the only reason. If you don't want to be clubbed to death with that hidden rifle you were threatening me with, you better start moving, Gerson!"

The little man grinned wickedly.

"That was a way out for you, Kerrigan," he murmured. "You haven't got any, now. You won't move a stick toward the river!"

He swung around and trotted back toward the brush. When he was gone, Kerrigan spat. Alex Jorgenson and one of the roustabouts who had been working on the brush in the clearing came up to him from somewhere behind. Jorgenson was scowling darkly.

"There's the contract in your pocket, boy," he said. "Hope you don't mind Ed and me coming down like this, but I seen Gerson moving this way and he had a couple boys with him. Figured you had the same right. Look, the three of us will go down the flume to Mackay's Tonnere office. He'll be there, seeing as how he's expecting the first cut from here down tonight or in the morning. With what Ed and me heard and will swear to, Mackay will toss out Gerson's bid cold. The Old Man's that kind."

Kerrigan shook his head.

"I got a hunch this is one contract the Old Man don't care about the first cut on. He knows I'm a timberman and Gerson's a corner-cutting, paper-figuring thief. He had his reason for matching me against Gerson, and I don't think it's got anything to do with who gets down the first log. I think the three of us and the rest of the boys had better start on a little trip, but it won't be down toward the Tonnere."

Jorgenson grinned, then started to scowl again.

"Across the ridge, eh?" he guessed. "All right, Steve. We're with you. But you'll lose the contract sure if you guess wrong. Regardless of what he thinks of Gerson, Mackay would back him up if we jumped him without any real reason. And all we got to go on is talk, so far."

"Gerson claims he uses his head. Let's use ours. He said we wouldn't move a stick. Think it over. Our spar's topped and half-rigged by now. Our donkey's set up and making steam. Our road's practically cleared. And we got water in our flume. He's not going to try anything in our camp. He couldn't get close enough. So what's he got left?"

"The flume," Alex said. "Wreck that and we'd be stopped cold. And he could always claim a deadfall had spilled into it and done the damage or a trestle had buckled and let it down. You mean we'll patrol the flume, then, not head for his camp."

"I suppose when you fell a tree, Alex, you start to work on a sapling beside it! We're heading for Gerson's camp."

JORGENSON and two or three veterans in Kerrigan's crew were obviously troubled as the whole camp moved through the timber on the ridge slope. They had been in the hills long enough to know John Mackay's devotion to fairness in all things. They knew the old king of the Tonnere timber trade would stick by his worst enemy if he believed provocation in any quarrel had been on the other side. However, their concern did not dampen the enthusiasm with which they viewed an invasion of a hostile camp.

There were no weapons visible among them. By and large, short of firearms and cannon, there were probably in the world no more effective weapons than the two balled knots of bone and flesh into which each man of the crew could fashion his hands. Kerrigan's crew marched behind him and on either flank in a compact group. They made no attempt to move silently. As a consequence, Gerson's boys heard them coming. And there were timbermen among those whom Gerson had hired, also.

The man ran from his office as his crew poured from the cookshack where they had apparently been sitting down to eat. He tried to get in front of them. He tried to harangue Kerrigan. But a

logger with fight on his mind wanted only fight. There were no challenges, no vituperation. Each man found a foeman —two, if his spirits were high—and the meaty sounds of working fists drowned out Gerson's attempts to parley. A bantam muleskinner out of Kerrigan's crew loosened the man's front teeth and silenced him. A big axeman sized up Kerrigan and unloosed a long swing which rocked Steve back on his heels.

It lasted a long time. There was steady violence, but it was peculiarly detached. There was no personal animosity, except where a stinging blow drew anger as it drew blood, but it was grim work.

Kerrigan had one eye closed. His front teeth were as loose as Gerson's must be. The little boss of the hostile camp vanished after the first impact. Steve saw Alex Jorgenson banging at two Gerson men at once, using one as a ram against the other. He saw his donkey fireman out cold and two Gerson men near him. He moved from one man to another and from this one to a third. Others in his bunch had to do the same. Gerson's was the bigger camp and the bigger crew.

The horizon, night-shrouded, was an unsteady thing when he came up finally to Jorgenson and stood staring at him, aware that Gerson's men were done. Jorgenson was looking toward Gerson's office. Two men stood there. One was the little outlander who wanted to make logging a business of shrewdness and close-cutting instead of trade for men as big inside as out. The other was a tall old man with a white mane, huge of body, still, and with shoulders which had been built in youth on a man's end of a double-bitted axe. The Old Man of the Tonnere. John Mackay.

When Kerrigan and Jorgenson reached the doorway, Gerson was spitting hasty protest through swollen lips.

"You guaranteed a fair cut from the deck for both of us, Mackay! And look at this. One of his boys claims I busted open his flume so he couldn't float a stick down. It isn't so, by hell! Not me or one of my boys touched his damned wooden ditch!"

"That so?" John Mackay asked mildly. "Hell of a note. You're done, Gerson. Not going to be able to get a worthwhile timberjack to sign on with you after this. The boys like to work for a winning boss. One that's been whipped—"

"I know it!" Gerson stormed. "That's something you'll have to square for me. You'll have to make the trade know I was jumped without reason here. I tell you, I never touched that flume!"

"I come in past the head of Kerrigan's trough," Mackay said. "The reason being there wasn't no water in it at his camp. I found a couple planks pried loose with a sapling almost up to the intake. There's a man's tracks leading off this way. Go see for yourself, Gerson. Kerrigan gets this contract."

Gerson's shoulders sagged. He turned back into the office. John Mackay came down the steps and joined Kerrigan. Reaching into his pocket, he handed Steve a folded document.

"Took a chance and had it made out to you before I left the Tonnere. Figured you might come out on top, somehow." He paused, looking down at his boots. "Kind of muddy walking, coming across from that flume-head of yours, Steve."

Jorgenson waited. Kerrigan waited, knowing there was more.

"You and your boys done a good job here, Steve. Whipped that little conniver down where he won't bother nobody. Could have done it myself, clamping down on him, but I'm big and he's little and up in the tall sticks like this, the jacks would have figured I was bullying him. They would have kept on working with him and giving him a hand, even when they hated his guts, because of that. A boy his own size had to whack off his toes in a fair tangle. You done it nice."

Mackay paused, fiddling with the palm of one great, blue-veined hand.

"Steve, you got a pocket-knife? Seems I got a sliver. Next time a flume goes in on one of my leases, I'm going to move a planing mill in so's it can be built of smooth lumber!"

Jorgenson grunted then, shocked and near laughter. "You busted our flume yourself!"

"Now how can you say that, Alex?" John Mackay asked aggrievedly. "And after the way you was raised to believe that all us jacks hang together?"

THE WHALE THAT

By CHARLES YERKOW

The skipper aimed the gun carefully, and fired at the helpless humpback.

WHISTLED BACK

CAPTAIN Lem Lorro did not believe that too much practicality could ruin a man in the eyes of his crew. He did not argue the point; he merely felt that a man ought to be practical in everything he did. Aye, that was only being reasonable and just, no matter what the others of the Coren Whaling Company had to say about it. To the other captains and gunners, as well as to the mates and men of the cookery and the whale killer-boats, he was "The Practical Captain." He didn't really mind the name.

For three years Captain Lorro had been in command of the high-bowed,

ILLUSTRATED BY CHARLES GEER

trim all-steel *Rorqual*, one of the four killer-boats owned by the Company, and in that time his crew learned to accept his practical and frugal traits as they accepted the roughest seas or the trying long hours of stalking a blue whale. There was a saying on board the *Rorqual*—you were wise if you did not show waste of any kind, not in front of Captain Lorro.

There was the time off the east Australian coast when the mate, Morse, and the lookout, Joseph, rowed the dory to the island where they had seen some giant turtles; Joseph took the new tin pail along to fetch turtle eggs, and, on their way back, he accidentally poked his elbow against the pail and it tipped over into the sea. For two years thereafter, on every return to those whaling grounds, Captain Lorro would remind the two, Joseph in particular, about the lost tin pail.

On board the *Rorqual* you could not so much as throw a rotted length of old hawser overboard.

But if Captain Lorro was severe with his men he was even more so with himself. If he was to blame for some oversight, he admitted it, retreated to his cabin, and the crew would not see him again that day. This, of course, did not happen often. There was the time when his harpoon missed the finner he aimed at and hit another whale sounding alongside the first one. Aye, The Practical Captain had got a whale with his shot, but not the whale he aimed at! While the mate Morse and the crew played the finner, and Joseph up in the lookout barrel whooped gleefully, the skipper angrily locked down the gun and stomped off to his cabin, not to show himself the rest of the day.

The crew laughed over that incident, while Captain Lorro looked at it from the practical side. The harpoon might not have hit that other whale, and that would have meant wasted powder and wasted time. Then, the whale might not have run ahead, as it had luckily done, and might have dragged the line aft into the propeller.

Nevertheless, the crew joked about it; they said The Practical Captain got his whale—by mistake.

THE SKIPPER was a wide-chested big man alongside the small scrawny lookout Joseph, and where Captain Lorro was serious and reserved, Joseph was playful and clownish, standing hunched over with his bony knees pointing to starboard and port, and the ear flaps of his old knitted cap waving in the wind like the ears of an elephant. He never shaved, or at least no one had ever seen him do so, and the skipper loathed the sight of that shrubby head meeting him on the deck and cackling a joke at him.

But Joseph was a good lookout; he knew his whales by blow and smell; and would have the *Rorqual* alongside a herd of blue whales or finners long before the other killer-boats knew whales were in sight. Captain Lorro therefore held Joseph as part of a good crew, and besides, it would be wasteful to attempt replacing the lookout with a more level-headed man who might not have Joseph's sense for whaling.

Had anyone told Captain Lorro that Joseph would be the one to break him of his practicality—aye, the skipper in his shock would have toppled over backward.

This year the fleet of one floating cookery, the *Baleen*, and her four whale killer-boats made for the east Australian coast to their grounds in the bay. In passing that turtle island, Captain Lorro called to Joseph and pointed over the rail at the sea.

"That brand new pail, Joseph, sure isn't doing any good down there, huh?"

Joseph rubbed his whiskers and grinned owlishly at the skipper. The mate Morse, standing spread-legged on the harpoon gun platform, twisted his face into an amused smile—he was beginning to see the joke of it. Captain Lorro, of course, was serious about it all.

"See that it doesn't happen again, Joseph. A new pail doesn't cost a penny, you know."

The hunting area of the bay stretched over fifty miles around them, and as soon as the *Baleen* anchored, the killer-boats raced into the small coastal harbor to coal up and take on food provisions, and then the routine of whaling began.

Captain Lorro wasted no time in getting the *Rorqual* out of the harbor and headed for her day-long whale chases. The gulls and petrels wheeled over the calm sea and the sunlight filtered through the haze onto the sooty decks and the lazy green swells. The sister ships fanned out past the cluster of rocky bay islands. The hunt was on. . .

With Joseph up in the lookout barrel sighting for the blow of finners, the *Rorqual* had no trouble getting her share of whales. But all through the first weeks of the hunt Captain Lorro's practical trait was at work—he'd not chase the smaller humpbacks, even when one was right under his bows, but would always try for the larger finners farther away. The fin whales gave more oil! To the crew a whale was a whale, and they couldn't comprehend the skipper's reasoning. "The Practical Captain," they remarked with a shrug.

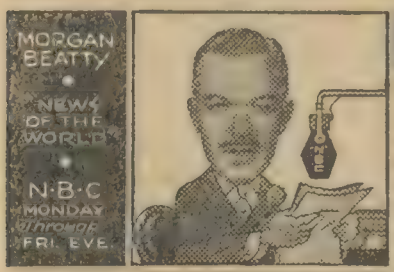
The work went on, from the time Joseph sighted a whale's blow, through the careful silent approach, using the speaking tube instead of the clanging bridge telegraph to the engine room, then the *boom* of the harpoon gun and the snake-like whipping *whoosh* of the line through the mast and deck blocks, and finally the long playing of the stricken beast or the short work of hauling the dead mass to the surface if the harpoon killed it instantly. And while the crew hurried to pump up the whale to leave it floating with the four-day lamp and company flag jabbed in the thick blubber, Joseph was already sighting the next kill.

All through this the seriousness of Captain Lorro, his practicality and his frugalness, showed at every turn and twist of the whaling line; his frowns, when the crew took too long to do something; his knotted brow, when Joseph joked and chattered from the lookout barrel at the moment when a whale was ten yards off in perfect position for a shot.

Since whales were plentiful, The Practical Captain did not press and prod his men. After several days of chasing, the killer-boats backtracked to haul in the dead air-pumped whales to the cookery. Those were the easy slack days for the crews but the driving hard days for the flensers and others on the *Baleen*—strip the blubber and cut it into chunks, and feed the chunks into the steam pressure cookers, then saw up the jaw bones. Work, work, work . . . Blow the waste overboard and start all over again. An hour to a whale. Work, work. . .

After coaling, the sister ships again fanned out into the bay, and, with each successive haul-in, the tension between skipper and crew began to grow, since each killer-boat wanted to have the biggest catch of whales. The old flaming struggle to exceed one another! And talking about it whenever there was time, the crews began to figure their bonus, and the extra bonus if their ship should have the biggest catch.

EVERYTHING might have gone well—even though Captain Sager of the *Nicholson* was five whales up on Captain Lorro—had not Joseph suddenly got something into his mind. With the



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Rorqual coaling in the harbor, he asked the mate Morse to let him take the dory to the island and fetch some turtle eggs.

"There's no time for it," the mate tried to convince him. "We'll be putting out, and you know Captain Lorro wouldn't like it. Can't even talk to him nowadays. All he's doing is thinking how to shoot five whales with one shot." The mate chuckled at his own joke.

But Joseph, not in the least concerned with the rivalry between the skippers of the *Rorqual* and *Nicholson,* insisted on taking the dory.

"Look then, Joseph," the mate sighed. "You go to the skipper and ask him yourself. I'll have nothing to do with it. You want the dory, you ask him."

Joseph did just that, and his luck was such that he found the skipper arguing with Captain Sager on how the harpoon ought to be aimed at a blue whale surfacing twenty yards off the port bow in a heavy sea, so that Captain Lorro had no time to argue with Joseph about the foolishness of looking for turtle eggs. He only turned to remark that Joseph be sure and return early, and added, "Take that old pail from the galley."

Joseph took the old pail with the rusted-away bottom, crammed a scrap of mesh-wire into it, and took the dory. The mate Morse decided to go along and see to it that Joseph returned early and did not anger the skipper.

Neither Joseph nor the mate suspected that they'd see and hear the whistling whale, and much less suspect that this in the end would upset the practical behavior of Captain Lorro.

Rowing to the shallow sandy island beach, they started searching for the flipper tracks left by the cunning turtles. Crabs crawled about in the white hot sand and the island birds screeched madly.

The two men walked up the beach, with Joseph kicking up the sand in his attempt to discover hidden nests. The whaling season was nearing its close and that meant the first turtles should be coming out to lay their eggs. But there were no visible flipper tracks anywhere.

The screeching birds began to irritate the mate. "Let's get out of here," he said, wiping sweat off his face. "This sounds worse than the blowers on the cookery!"

Joseph laughed. "You've no love for the song o' birds? Just listen to 'em! Real nice, huh?"

The screeching and screaming was deafening to the ears, but then both men suddenly stood still and listened to a shrill whistle coming over the low rise of land and rocks on the other side of the island. Puzzled, the two men looked at each other.

"Maybe Captain Lorro changed his mind and sent Hartvig to call us back," the mate remarked.

"Shush," Joseph said, listening.

Again the shrill whistle sounded.

"How can a man whistle like that?"

The mate shrugged.

His curiosity now aroused, Joseph started walking up the rise. "I'll go and see what it is."

He was gone some time, and then Morse decided to follow him. He heard that shrill whistle twice and upon reaching the top of the hill he saw Joseph sitting below on the rocks, near the shore, and a way out on the swells a humpback whale flashed its long flipper and sounded out of sight. Morse stood for a second to think over what he had heard and seen, then ran down the slope to where Joseph was sitting.

"Joseph! Is that whale doing it?"

"Aye," Joseph said quietly. He smiled and rubbed his shaggy whiskers. "Just you watch now. That humpback'll be up again."

The humpback broke through the swell, blowing—the shrill whistle echoing in the distance and the spray of its blow lingering for a moment as if made by the careless stroke of an artist's silver brush on a pale blue canvas background.

Morse stood speechless for a moment. Joseph chuckled and slapped his thighs.

The whale blew, and the high-pitched whistle almost drowned out the screeching birds.

"Sainted masts of me grandfather's schooner!" the mate exclaimed. "Nobody'll believe us when we tell them what we saw!"

"Ain't he something, Morse?" Joseph laughed. "Ever see one like that before?" He rocked back and forth slapping his

thighs, laughing. *"Ho-ho! Haaa! Ho-ho!"* He got up and walked closer to the shore, all the while laughing and pointing out to sea where the humpback playfully rolled between the swells and jutting rocks. "Listen to him, Morse! Look at him scrape his barnacled hide!"

The whale blew, and the shrill whistle cracked against the men's ears; they watched awhile, laughing at the playful humpback, and Joseph tried to guess why it whistled. He even forgot about the turtle eggs he had come for. When the whale at last drifted far away, the mate urged that they better get back to the ship.

As they rowed toward the *Rorqual* Joseph strained his eyes and cocked his ears to the faint sea sounds in the hope of again seeing and hearing the whistling whale.

"BACK HOME off Provincetown," Joseph said, "they caught a whistling whale once. Old Man Gillis lost money that day. He bet it was a broken harpoon that caused the whistling, but it turned out to be a clam shell lodged in the whale's blow hole." Joseph went on talking and guessing at what caused a humpback like this one to whistle, and by the time they reached the ship the mate wished there had been no freak whale at all. But there had been, and Joseph's simple joy and interest to tell the others what he'd seen flooded the *Rorqual,* and by next day the sister ships and the cookery too. Every last man down to the bunkers heard about the whistling whale off the bay island.

Captain Lorro, too, heard the story, but his mind at the time was filled with thoughts of tying the score with Captain Sager; the *Nicholson* was five whales up on the *Rorqual,* but obviously a freak humpback that could not yield as much oil as a fin whale did not interest The Practical Captain.

Now Joseph had not told the story of the whistling whale in order to have the skippers of the killer-boats hunt and kill it. Not at all. He told it because he thought they'd like to hear about a playful humpback that could whistle.

In the next few days Captain Lorro proved himself a master at the harpoon gun. He shot three finners in a row, shooting each one in the tail so as to force it to drown—it was easier on the beasts, and it was quick work for the crew.

Joseph called every blow, and every blow was chased. If the whale proved to be big enough, over thirty-five feet, it was shot; if it turned out to be a cow with a calf alongside, it was left alone. As much as The Practical Captain wanted whales, he didn't want illegal whales. And in three days the *Rorqual* tied the score with the *Nicholson!*

The mates and the men grumbled. They knew they'd be pushed now to the limits of their endurance. Both skippers would drive their respective crews, for each skipper wanted to have one whale more.

Only one thing could stop this crazy rivalry. Captain Bart of the cookery. If he said "Finish work" it would mean the vats were full, it would mean riding at anchor and waiting for the flensers to clear the last whale off the deck, for the machinery to shut down, for the cleaning-up and the long voyage home. But when would Captain Bart call "Finish" for them? The men grumbled, cursed, and went on with their work.

The killer-boats wallowed on, searching, searching. The calm sea and the absence of a blow touched the senses to imagine an invisible power herding away all the whales, leaving the ships to roam restlessly in search of their prey.

Captain Lorro scanned the vast sea with his long glass. He put down the glass and glared at Joseph up in the lookout barrel.

"Are you awake?" he shouted. "Joseph! Call 'em as you see 'em!"

Frowning, Joseph looked down. "I don't see nothing!"

"Mean to tell me there's not a whale left in the bay? Look around! Stop sleeping!"

"Aye, aye, Captain." Joseph lifted his stubby finger to touch his knitted cap, imitating a salute, then he chuckled and let a joke of a remark fall.

Captain Lorro scowled, and then went back to searching the sea with his long glass.

After his noon coffee and still no blow sighted, the skipper accepted the matter as final. Standing on the bridge alongside the mate, he said philosophically, "We might as well take it as it comes. No whales, so it'll have to be no whales." He sighed, hooked his thumbs into the corners of his pockets. "If I could just get me one whale to go better than Sager. Do you think his lookout sighted one?" He turned to squint toward the *Nicholson* wallowing on the horizon.

The mate knew the answer dare not to be in the affirmative; shaking his head, he said, "If Joseph can't see a blow, nobody can. Joseph can smell them whales as far as your glass can see them."

Captain Lorro agreed and glanced up at the barrel. There was Joseph, with the flaps of his knitted cap lifting in the light breeze, turning his head around and around, but calling nothing down. The skipper sighed—it wasn't likely that he'd get a whale to go one better than Sager.

It was then the big Swede came up the ladder and said the cookery had just sent out a wireless message.

"Captain Bart says vee *finish* today. He vant us back to the *kokeri* right avay." The big Swede said the word "finish" loudly, for the deck men to hear.

One of the crew shouted: *"Finish! Finish!"* Below decks the same shout went up. *"Finish!"*

Up in the barrel Joseph yawned and stretched his leg over the barrel and came lazily down to the deck. The score was tied, and the crew would now breathe easy again.

But Captain Lorro's mind was still working around that one whale he needed to go one better than Captain Sager, and, as he glanced at Joseph standing there bow-legged on the deck, the skipper suddenly had the solution.

"Joseph!" he shouted.

The lookout came on the run.

"Where did you see that freak humpback?"

Joseph missed the importance of the question. "That turtle island," he answered innocently and unsuspectingly, and he even pointed over the bow at the short strip of land in the distance.

Captain Lorro's eyes gleamed. "That'll do it! What luck! *Blum bagetty!*" He lifted his long glass to look at the hazy outline of the bay island. "Full speed, Morse!" Then he turned to Joseph. "What did you say it was, Joseph? Oh, yes—a whistling whale. Keep a sharp lookout now!"

Joseph frowned as he realized what the skipper wanted to do. Captain Lorro was going to kill that playful humpback.

The mate Morse sensed how Joseph felt about this, but he could do no more than obey orders. He swung the bridge telegraph handle. The engines clanged into life, sending the bow cutting through the sea.

JOSEPH stepped hesitantly up to Captain Lorro. "We got the finish order, Captain. Aren't we gonna go back to the cookery?"

If there was a pleading note in Joseph's voice, the skipper failed to notice it. Instead, his brow knotting, he said sharply, "On this ship we're finished when I give the order!" He paused, looked hard at Joseph. "Now get a move on!"

In Joseph's simple mind the words for argument were lost. All that he could do was clamber back up into the barrel as the *Rorqual* made toward the island, while Captain Lorro stood bewildered on the bridge and wondered what the devil had prompted Joseph to act this way. Surely any crew of any killer-boat would be proud to stand above another crew, and that one freak whale would do it for them.

Unable to puzzle it out, the skipper turned his long glass toward the *Nicholson*. He expected to see her heading for the cookery, yet here she was running parallel with the *Rorqual*. Pursing his lips, Captain Lorro decided that the arm of coincidence was long indeed—meaning that Sager had the same idea about getting Joseph's whistling whale.

Captain Lorro judged he'd reach the bay island well ahead of Sager. It was early afternoon with plenty of time for the chase and for the kill. Aye, he couldn't miss out, not with Joseph for a lookout and himself at the gun. . .

When he thought of Joseph, the skip-

per felt an uneasiness take hold of him, and to shake it off he went down the plank to the gun platform to check over things. The lashings holding the harpoon in place and the short cords around the prongs. The loaded gun, and the gun swivel. The line neatly coiled in its place forward of the gun.

Every now and then he glanced up at the barrel; he watched Joseph leaning his elbows over the barrel's rim, his eyes straining to the distant island, his ear flaps waving. What thoughts? the skipper wondered. That the whale escape them? That they don't even sight the whale? All because that humpback was a rollicking fellow and could whistle! So! Joseph was feeling sorry for that freak humpback! That would be just like Joseph! A simple thing for a simpleton! Couldn't the fool see the practical side of it? The oil in that whale? No, not Joseph.

Up in the barrel Joseph looked sullen and sad, and Captain Lorro spat as he strode back to the bridge. "Crazy fool," he mumbled to himself. You don't go by a man's feelings for a freak humpback, not in this whaling business you don't. You run up your catch, and you collect the bonus in cash. Too practical? Maybe so. Aye, the cookery had called "finish" but if you left that humpback you were leaving it for Sager. He'd made short work of it, whistle or no whistle.

Captain Lorro paced the narrow bridge irritably, a little lost in his own thoughts.

The *Rorqual* neared the island's jutting rocks.

Joseph leaned out of the barrel and held his arm out, pointing at a faint spray.

"Blo-o-o-o-w!"

The shrill whistle drifted across the heaving swells, and the crew crowded the rail for a better look at the whistling whale.

Captain Lorro, too, watched intently, and the mate Morse held the wheel down as he used the speaking tube to ask for slow speed. The engines slowed to a steady turning, and the *Rorqual* skirted around in a wide arc.

The skipper patted the mate on the back. "Keep close in. We'll get him for sure." He ran down to the gun platform from where he glanced aft to see the *Nicholson* also heading for the shore. Captain Sager's play was obvious—he was trying to block the *Rorqual* from reaching the whale.

But the move was too late. Morse brought the ship in first; Captain Lorro grinned as he unlocked the gun and swung it easily. This was it. One whale to bring him out on top for the season's catch! Nothing must go wrong! The skipper smiled—how could anything go wrong when he had the best mate, the best men, and the best lookout? He glanced up at Joseph, hoping the man was over his childish sullenness.

Joseph's haggard and shaggy face stared back at him, but only for a second, then the lookout turned away to scan the sea for signs of the humpback.

"That fool!" Captain Lorro growled. "That fool's feeling sorry for a whale!" Shaking his head, and somehow aware of a strange indecision growing inside of him, causing a little fear to jump into his mind and whisper, "Maybe you'll let that whale alone," he pointed at the barrel and shouted, *"Joseph!"*

Joseph looked down. "Aye?"

The skipper shook his fist angrily. "You stop that! You stop it or I'll bust your face! What kind of a game you think you're playing, huh? So that whale whistles, *so what?* Look sharp, man—and call it right!"

Joseph's haggard face paled, draining of all hope that the humpback might be spared, and, looking into the black depths of the sea, he called out in a thin, shaking voice, "Whale coming up on the port bow!"

The mate put the wheel over and called for "Very slow." The skipper stepped aside and aimed the gun down. One of the crew remarked that the strain was beginning to show on The Practical Captain—"Hear the way he hollered at Joseph, and for no reason?"

The whale came up, its upper knobby jaw showing first, and then its whole back slid up out of the sea, with grotesquely long flippers waving. The shrill whistle ripped through the silence. The waving flippers appeared teasingly comical and there was a note of flaunting in

the high-pitched whistle, so that the deck crew of the *Rorqual* started to laugh.

The humpback dropped lazily back into the sea, with a huge splash closing around its flukes.

The mate on the bridge grinned, but Captain Lorro saw nothing to grin about, while Joseph hung his head and looked as if he'd never again tell a joke.

"Coming up ahead!" Joseph called.

The humpback surfaced, blowing its freak whistle in two short blasts.

CAPTAIN Lorro braced his legs as he swung the gun around, but, even before he could aim, the whale dropped back into the sea, leaving only the stench of its blow to linger in the bows and drift aft. The friskiness of the humpback angered the skipper.

Up in the lookout barrel Joseph rubbed his whiskers and searched for the shadow below the sea surface—even he seemed surprised by the playful beast.

"Where the devil are you looking?" Captain Lorro shouted.

"He's not ahead, Captain!" Joseph answered.

The skipper stomped impatiently and knotted his brow. "Now tell me he's gone astern!"

Before Joseph could look around, the humpback whistled.

"Whale astern!" Joseph called promptly.

Captain Lorro said something under his breath and waited for the mate to get the *Rorqual* around.

The crew roared with laughter.

Then the *Nicholson* tried to come in, and in the tight area of the sea which the humpback selected to play, the two ships found it difficult keeping out of each other's way.

The two crews thoroughly enjoyed the gamboling whale and the struggles of the mates to keep the ships moving with the growling skippers waiting at their harpoon guns. The humpback surfaced all right, but every time it was in the wrong place; it blew a shrill whistle in a flaunting call, teasingly waved its flippers as it jumped clear out of the sea, and before Captain Lorro or Captain Sager could make sure of their aim the whale sounded out of sight . . . only to come up again ahead or astern and there blow its freak whistling call.

For the crew the excitement of the chase had long vanished; they were now merely looking on as the humpback crowded the two ships, around and around, merrily . . . then gamboling out a ways to flip clear of the sea to whistle at them.

The engineer poked his head out once to ask what the trouble was. "What's going on?" he sneered at the mate. "First you want slow, then it's stop, then ahead, then stop, then astern! Are you playing a game with me?"

The deck crew roared with laughter and the mate waved his arms at the engineer.

"Go away! We've enough of a job without the machine works coming to the deck!"

The whale was now cavorting in all directions, and Captain Lorro was growing furious. He glared up at Joseph, as if to accuse the lookout of not calling out in time for the mate to get the ship within range.

Yet Joseph was doing his best. He had resigned himself to it—the whistling whale was sure to be a kill, for The Practical Captain would not rest now until the harpoon exploded inside that playful humpback.

The whale was now in the distance, lolling on the surface, whistling.

"He's headin' for the island!" Joseph called excitedly.

The mate put the wheel hard over and called for "Full ahead," keeping the *Rorqual* well ahead of her rival sister ship.

The skipper squinted up to see Joseph grinning—grinning and banging his clenched fists against the barrel, urging silently and hoping that the whale get away. The skipper scowled; from the deck the remarks of the laughing and joking crew drifted up.

"Can yuh figure what makes that humpback whistle?"

"The flensers'll find out."

"Maybe a clam shell, like Joseph says, or maybe an old harpoon?"

"Naw. He's probably just that kind of whale."

Someone laughed. "G'wan—there ain't no whales that whistle."

"There's one out there, and the captain's gonna get him sure."

Nearing the shore rocks, the mate Morse kept the *Rorqual* ahead of the sister ship, leaving the way clear for Captain Lorro. In the shallow water it would be a tricky job, but then neither could the humpback cavort as much and as freely.

"Off starboard!" Joseph called. "Coming up!"

Even before the shrill whistle of the surfacing humpback blew, the crew began laughing—to them that whale was a clown, and nothing was more important at the moment than enjoying the clown's performance.

Captain Lorro stomped his feet. "Shut up, you fools! *Shut up!*"

The whale whistled and the men tried to hold back their mirth. Now and then they stole a glance at the skipper to see if he wasn't yet taking it as a good joke. He wasn't.

The skipper swung his gun around. His crew, he told himself, was as big a bunch of fools as Joseph!

The mate brought the ship in easy, watched for the signal from the skipper.

The whale was in shallow water, trapped, its flukes toward the ship's bow, moving cautiously, trying to get its bearings in the face of threatening danger.

From the gun platform of the *Nicholson,* Captain Sager called across, "Let me show you how to get that crazy whistling whale!"

Captain Lorro ignored the remark and concentrated on the humpback lying helpless in shallow water. The whale blew, but its whistle sounded pitifully weak, forlorn, as if the beast knew this was the end. Its great flukes and long flippers moved awkwardly—at best, if left alone, it could only creep out of that trap.

The crew watched, and sensing that the fatal shot was about to be fired, not one of them laughed. Silence suddenly hung heavily over the ship.

Instead of aiming at the whale, Captain Lorro turned to look up at Joseph. The lookout had turned his back on the skipper and was looking out to sea. Captain Lorro frowned. "Crazy fool," he mumbled.

The *Rorqual* drifted closer to the helpless humpback.

The skipper aimed the gun carefully, and fired.

THE SHOT echoed away and the smoke lifted across to the *Nicholson,* and then the sea-muffled *boom* of the harpoon head exploding.

But that explosion sounded too muffled, too deep, and right after it, as if it had spurred the humpback into action, the whale thrashed its flukes in a mighty heave, whistled once, and then fled past the bow out to open sea.

The crew stood stunned, watching the whale head away, unable to believe what they had seen happen.

Captain Lorro had missed the whale!

The surprise of it was too great, and the men just stood around. The mate squinted, sighed, then called for "Half astern." He shouted to the lookout. "Hey, Joseph! Keep the whale in sight!"

It was then that Joseph shook himself out of his sullenness and looked after the humpback. The shrill whistle blew. Joseph beat his fists against the barrel and laughed—that harpoon explosion was putting speed into the whale's flight, and it was a slim chance they'd ever catch it now.

On the gun platform Captain Lorro smiled thinly and gave his orders to the mate.

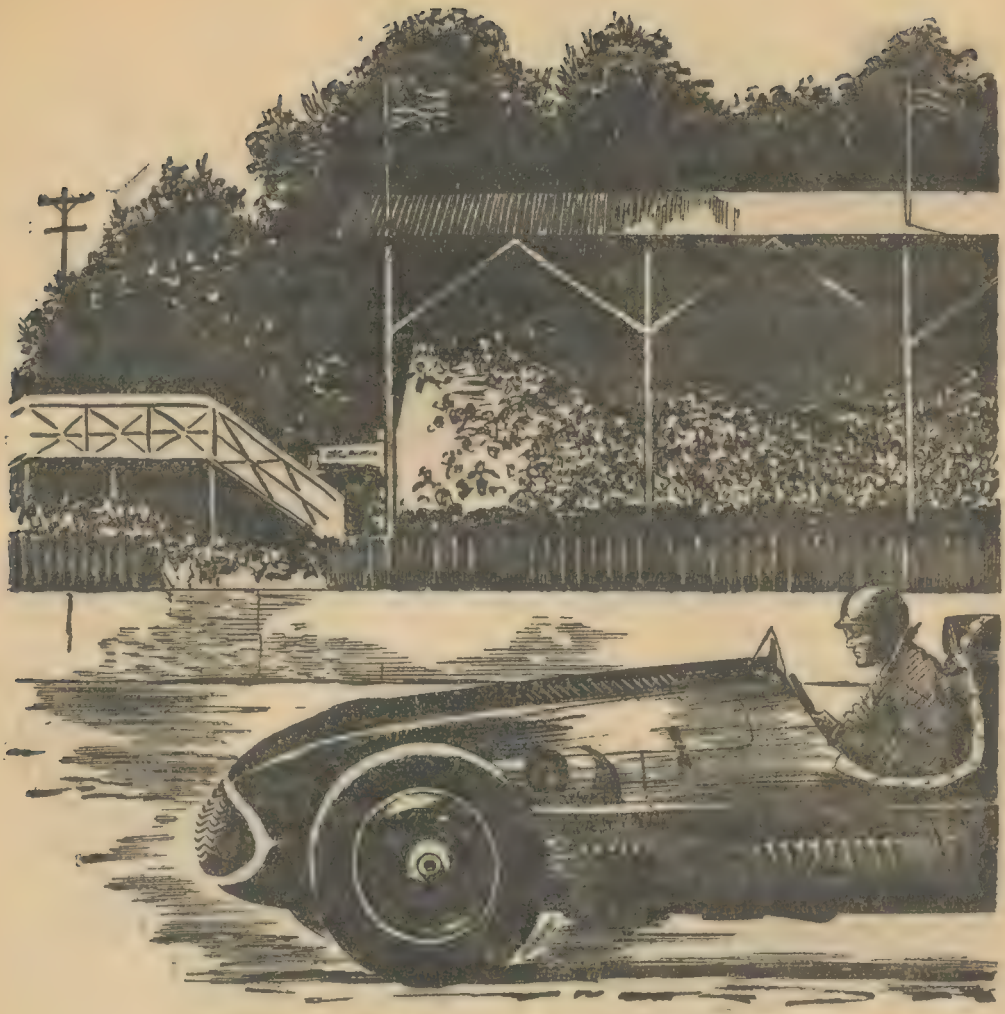
"Let the whale go, Morse."

Joseph heard it too, and he clapped his hands. "He let him go! He let him go!" Clambering down from the barrel, the lookout eagerly lent a hand in hauling up the bent harpoon; he, like the mate and the men, understood—The Practical Captain had *wasted* a shot to give the whistling whale its freedom!

Joseph's simple joy welled up to give him trouble with his throat when Captain Lorro passed by, so the most he could do was edge toward the skipper, nod to him, and touch his arm.

Captain Lorro pursed his lips and kept a straight face. "Well, Joseph," he said evenly, "that one got away on us."

(Continued on page 130)



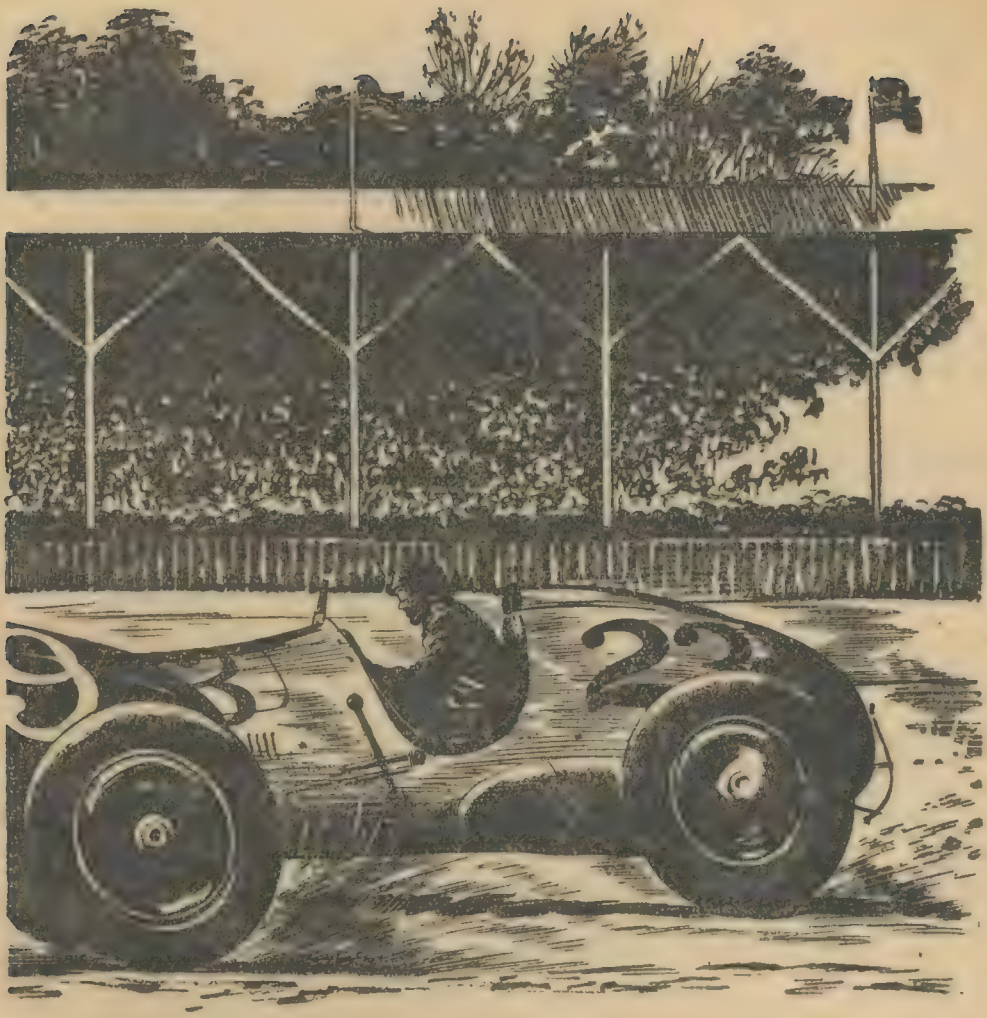
They were walking a tight-rope of disaster, both of them, the scream of their motors like a personal challenge.

SUICIDE

By
WILLIAM
CAMPBELL
GAULT

IT WAS the morning after the funeral, Jack came in. He looked a hundred years old. His face was gray-like, and his eyes tired. But there was a hard glint in those eyes, and his voice was like a file. "The car here, Walt?"

I nodded, not taking my eyes from his face. "It's out in the shop, Jack. It's in bad shape."



ILLUSTRATED BY MONROE EISENBERG

SPECIAL

"Too bad to fix?" he asked.

I didn't answer that right away. I'm six feet, six inches tall and I took the chance of not answering right away. Instead, I asked, "What's on your mind, Jack?"

"Tommy," he said.

Tommy had been his brother. Tommy had died in the Walt Watkins Special just four days ago. That's me, Walt Watkins, and I'd been in the business too long.

"I'm afraid I don't follow you, Jack," I said.

"I was thinking you might want a driver for it," he said.

I don't know what I'd been expecting, but not this. Jack was thirty-eight, and

he hadn't driven for five years. This was the car that killed his brother.

"Well . . . ?" he said, and I realized I hadn't answered him.

I said, "It's a jinx jalopy. It's a hoodoo heap, Jack. It put Buddy Elson over the bank at Ardmore. It broke Harve Lilley's leg at Fulton." And to myself, I said, *it killed your brother, at Springfield.*

"I'm not superstitious," he said. "It's a lot of car, in the right hands."

"You don't need the money," I said.

"No."

"Then—*why*, Jack?" I asked.

He met my look without flinching, but I knew he was lying when he said, "Just personal. I'd like to tame that baby."

I couldn't think of his angle, then, even though I knew that answer was too sentimental for Jack Coughlin. And not knowing his angle, what could I say? I'd kicked around with Jack for nearly twenty years. He'd driven for me and against me, and there wasn't a finer guy in the game.

I said, "O.K., Jack." I almost said, *it's your funeral,* but caught myself just in time.

WE WENT out into the shop, to look at the Special. Red was out there, pulling off the front wheels, and he looked up as we came close. Red's my number one mech.

He said good morning to Jack and then looked at me. "Slfe isn't as bad as I thought, Walt," he said.

"We'll re-build her," I said. "Jack's going to wheel her."

Red stared at me a second, and then looked at the car. He didn't say anything.

Jack said, "I'll change my clothes. I'll be back in an hour." He turned and walked from the shop.

Red looked at me. "What's the pitch?"

"I wish I knew."

He went back to work on the wheel. "Well, he's a good man with a wrench. We can use him there, if he's going to join the family."

"Up until he came in," I said, "I wasn't figuring on racing this year."

Red nodded. "I know. That's the same thing you've been telling me for eight years now."

I went back into the office, and tried to figure it out. But there wasn't any part of it made sense, and I gave up.

Jack's no sentimentalist, like I am. Jack's remark about "taming that baby" was phony as a lead dollar.

He was back in less than an hour, and he went out to help Red like a man with a mission. I stayed in the office and checked the Federation schedule. Allenton, we'd open there. Then Fulton, and Springfield. Springfield, where Tommy had died . . . No, maybe not Springfield.

But Allenton and Fulton, for sure. I began to get that feeling again, that yearning for the dust and the sun and the smell of oil. You'd think, when a guy passed fifty, he'd lose that feeling. You'd think he'd get some sense. Unless you've played the dirt yourself.

I know what you're thinking, that the brickyard's the cream, and it's a sight to see, all right, on Decoration Day. That's the majors, the brickyard. But I'll take the dirt. At Indianapolis it's ninety percent car and ten percent man. On the grit, it's wrists and guts and skill. Though you still have to have the equipment, those first three are what count.

It would be like old times, having Jack behind the wheel again. I hoped it would anyway. Jack was a very good boy on the dirt.

Jack was a fine boy with a wrench, too, as Red said. The Special began to shape up. And the day got closer, and the feeling grew in me.

We'd cut the wheelbase down on the Special and bored a couple more inches of displacement into her. We changed the pots, and experimented with a fuel change. She was a shade over two hundred and sixty cubic inches of four cylinder soup, when we'd finished. She was enough car for anybody.

Some of the hard tightness seemed to go out of Jack, as the days went on, but he didn't become what you'd call a conversationalist, by any means.

When the Special was ready, we took her over to Arco, to breeze her. Arco's running every week, and a lot of the boys never drive anywhere else. Quite a few of them were there, when we trucked

our job into the infield, that Thursday morning.

Local talent, mostly, excepting for Chips Malone. Chips was the Federation dirt track champ for last season. At twenty-two, he was as sweet a pilot as I'd ever seen, and I've seen 'em all.

Chip was talking to Rod Avery, as we unloaded, and he came over to help. It so happened that Jack was running the ramp up to the rear of the truck, and Chips went around to help.

Jack knew him. Chips had been one of Tommy's closest friends, and Jack knew him well. But you'd never know it, when Chips said, "Hello, Jack."

Jack just nodded, saying nothing, his eyes meeting Chips' for only a second.

I should have got a lead out of that, but Jack hadn't been exactly jovial lately.

I thought Chips flinched. I know he looked at me questioningly, but I shrugged, and he looked away. When he'd finished helping us, he went over to where his car was parked, in the infield parking lot.

He was driving out, as we jockeyed the Special into the pits.

Red said, "Chips isn't the boy he was, I hear." He said it quietly.

Jack was adjusting his helmet, some distance from us, fumbling with his goggle strap. I had the notion, somehow, that Red had said it quietly, like that, so Jack wouldn't hear.

Low voiced dialogues aren't for me, and I didn't answer Red. Then Jack came over to climb in behind the wheel. All the old tightness was back in his lean face. He looked at his hands, and at me.

His smile was just lips. "Five years, Walt," he said.

I nodded. "Once or twice around, lightly, boy. It'll come back. It's like riding a bike; you never forget."

"Sure," he said. He flexed his wrists. "It's these. This business is all wrist—and touch. Well . . ."

"It'll come back," I said, and signaled for some help. Red and another mech from a neighboring pit came over to push.

THE SPECIAL coughed, and died. Then she coughed and caught, and her song was sweet. She sounded right to me. It would be a new experience for me if she was, before her shakedown cruise. I am a very unlucky guy when it comes to timing.

We went back to the pits as Jack eased the Special into the stretch. I asked Red, "What were you saying about Chips?"

"He's lost his stuff, I hear. Just scuttlebutt, nothing definite. Hard to believe, isn't it?"

"I don't," I said.

"He didn't even show at Gilman."

"So. . . ?"

"That's his stamping grounds. That's where he learned his trade."

"And why should he lose his stuff?"

"I didn't hear that," Red said. "I'll listen around, if you want me to."

"Don't," I said. "You might hear a *fact* and it would throw you."

Red grinned at me. "What you all worked up about? What's Chips to you?"

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"The champ," I said. "The best. Twenty-two years old, and a right guy, as good as I've *ever* seen. Thirty-five years, I've been in this game, Red. And I repeat, he's as good as I've *ever* seen."

"You don't need a soapbox to tell me about Chips," he said. "I just give you the rumors 'cause I figure you're too old to get around and scare 'em up for yourself."

I ignored him, and watched Jack loafing through the backstretch. Something was scratching at my brain, trying to get in. It didn't make it. My mind maintained its normal blankness.

Jack gunned her a little into the north bend, came singing through, throwing a little grit. Down the front alley, he was moving smartly, but not pressing at all.

Some of the boys in the pits looked up to watch him. They hadn't come over to greet him, when we arrived; they'd heard of his grimness. But I knew they were all wishing him well.

I was thinking less of Jack than I was of the Special. I was watching that baby like a doubtful father. I'm not too superstitious, but if there'd ever been a hoodoo heap, this was it.

She was acting like a lady, when Jack moved her past the pits. Her tone was nice, and she looked solid and clean. The sun glinted off her black deck, as Jack bored into the south.

Rod Avery was standing beside me, suddenly. "What's the deal?" he asked. "Jack driving for you?"

I looked at him. "Mmm-hmm. Why?"

"That's what I'd like to ask, why? He doesn't need the money; he's still got that dry cleaning plant, right?"

"That's right. And a good manager for it. What are *we* doing here, Rod? I'm fifty-three and you're close to fifty."

"I like it," he said. "And so do you, and you're fifty-*five*."

"Maybe Jack likes it, too," I said. "Maybe dry cleaning isn't enough for him." I paused then, before asking, "Chips wheeling your new one, this year, again?"

"I guess so." Rod shook his head. "I don't know about him. Since Springfield—" He shrugged.

Right then that thing scratching at my brain found the opening and I could only stare at Rod. "Since Springfield," I said like a jerk. "Since Springfield—"

Rod met my stare. "That's why I was wondering. If you had too much imagination, and the guy was your brother, and—"

"No," I said, and my voice was rough. "We've got to remember this is Jack Coughlin, Rod. This is no mug. This is *Jack*."

"That's what I'm trying to remember," Rod said. "That's what I want to bank on. I just thought you might know something I didn't, Walt." He went back to his pit.

I stood there, in the dust of Arco, but my mind was back at Springfield. My mind was seeing the black Special, with Tommy at the wheel, with Chips crowding him, trying to sneak by next to the fence. The terrific screen of dust, and the stands up, as those two fought it out in the gritty haze of that furrowed track.

They'd fought it out all year, those two, friends though they were, and Chips had had the edge, until today. Now Tommy was leading him home and Chips had seen that gap, coming out of the north, and slammed in for it.

I saw Tommy going wide, regaining control, then going wide again, right near the concrete abutment protecting the stands. Then the gilhooley, and the nose of the Special smashing into that concrete wall.

And high in the murky air, the body of Tommy Coughlin, the shoeless body of Tommy Coughlin outlined against the sun.

Nobody had thought of Chips, then. I'd seen it all, and never figured Chips had any part of it. But now . . .

Now I'd have to believe in Jack. The man with the scythe is always riding along, in this game. Tommy had known that, died knowing it. Jack had shaken hands with the gent, himself, a few times, so Jack knew. And Jack knew Chips.

It wasn't hot enough for me to be sweating, but I was.

Red's voice cut through to me. "You sick, Walt? What's the matter?"

"Nothing," I said. "Some—shrimp I had last night."

Red looked at me suspiciously.

"What'd Rod have to say?"

"He was moaning about mechs," I said. "He claims all the good mechs are gone. Don't heckle me, Red."

Jack was coming around again, moving, making time. There was a little whine in the black baby's song, now. He was starting to barrel her.

Chips had lost his stuff. Since Springfield . . .

The black job went into the south turn, and a six foot fan of grit went cascading out from those swinging rear wheels. Smart, he was handling her, neat. He certainly hadn't lost much of his touch.

Not Jack, no. Jack had been too long in the game and he knew that all kinds of things happen in competition and very few of the bad things are intentional. Jack was an old hand, not some speed-drunk kid with a lot of crazy hallucinations.

What could I say to him? That I suspected he had *murder* in his heart? Say that to Jack Coughlin? No. Not even if I thought it, and I didn't think it. Not yet. Not by a long shot.

The Special screamed through the backstretch, and all the boys in the pits were watching this display, this thirty-eight year old man with five inactive years behind him making my black baby talk. And making her behave. Oh yes, she was a lady that morning.

The dust was there, in the air, and the sound of the Special was sweet, and the smell of the oil burning was what it had always been. All these should have made me happy, if I believed in Jack. But I wasn't happy.

When Jack came chugging in, a lap later, there was a light in his eyes. "I'd forgotten what a wallop it was," he said excitedly.

"You looked good," I said. "You looked like I remembered you."

"Not quite," he said. "But I know it will come, now."

"We've got some time," I said. "We'll travel those midwest tracks, and it's still cold back there. I figured Allenton, first."

"Fine," Jack said. "Any Federation track's O.K. And it'll give me time to get in a few workouts here at Arco."

CHAPTER II

LAST YEAR'S CHAMP

THAT seemed like a good idea. Only the rain we'd been expecting all winter decided to come about then. In California, once it starts raining, you can't be sure it'll ever stop. This one had been long overdue, and we needed it. But not for racing.

Jack got three days in and no more, before we shipped to Allenton. We took the Caddy, towing the trailer. We took our time.

Even if we won consistently, we wouldn't make much money on the circuit, considering the expenses. But I'd been born in Illinois; all my happy memories were of the Middle West, all my young memories. A man's entitled to a little sentimental expense, once a year.

This Allenton oval is pretty well banked, a mile long and well maintained. Al Butler was there, Gus Tobray and some of the others. Chips Malone was there.

He'd been a cocky kid, this Chips, but nobody disliked him for that. At his age, we were all cocky.

Red and Jack were fiddling with the Special when I went down to Avery's pit to talk to Chips.

I said, "You playing the dirt again this year? I thought you'd planned to hit Indianapolis."

He smiled at me, and shook his head. "It fell through. The outfit got themselves another boy." He paused. "How come Jack's back in the game?"

"I've been trying to figure that out, myself," I said.

There was a silence, while he looked at me. Then, "I talked to Jack, at Springfield. I told him just how it happened. He asked me. He seemed satisfied, then."

"So. . . ?" I said.

"So, at Arco, you were there when he snubbed me."

"Maybe he didn't mean it," I said. "Maybe he was thinking of something else, or—"

"Maybe. I was one of Tommy's best friends. Everybody knows that, including Jack."

"And we all know Jack, too," I said, "and knowing him, none of us should think like—like we might be thinking, now. Like *you* might."

Chips' young face was bitter. "What does it matter, what we think? I'd like to know what he's thinking."

I put a hand on the lad's shoulder. "So would I, Chips. But until we find out, we'll try and think the right way, huh?"

"O.K.," he said. "O.K., Walt. And—thanks for coming over."

"I'm proud to know you," I said, and walked away before I'd have a chance to say anything more sentimental. I'm a great admirer of guts and heart.

When I got back to our pit, Jack was climbing into the car. The motor was turning over, and Red was listening to it in that dissatisfied way he has.

Jack adjusted his helmet and smiled at me. "Like old times, Walt. I learned the trade at this track."

"You learned it well," I said. "But easy does it, remember. You didn't get much of a work-out at Arco."

He nodded, and the black job began to ease forward. I thought of saying something else, something about Chips, but decided against it.

When the Special was out moving past the stands, Red said, "Chips going to drive Avery's car?"

"I guess so."

Red said nothing for a moment. Then, "I hope there won't be any trouble."

"There won't be," I said.

I was right about that. I learned later that Chips had demanded appearance money for this race, because of last season's title. It was a good thing he had.

The first race was a ten mile job, and there were six cars entered. Chips was fifth in that field; the sixth car burned out a rod, or Chips would have been sixth.

We weren't entered. We watched it from our pit. Gus Tobray won by a three foot margin over Ted Damago. The third car was a half lap behind, the rest scattered beyond that.

"Champ," Red said. "Last year he was champ."

Jack said, "He's getting appearance money."

I said nothing.

Red shook his head. "And what a boy he used to be."

Jack yawned and went over to climb into the Special. Jack flexed his hands and stretched, and settled into the seat like a man who's going to drive a load of beer to Peoria. But his eyes were thoughtful; he seemed to be planning something.

Fifteen miles, eight cars, and not a clunker in the field. Jack looked up at me, and said, "Competition, that's what makes life worth living. First competition in five years, Walt."

"You must have had some in your business," I said.

"This is my business," he told me.

Well, maybe that's what had brought him back. I wanted to think so, at the time.

He started in the last row, on the inside. In fifteen miles, you've got to eat a lot of grit if you want to stay within hailing distance, from that spot.

He ate a lot of dirt. They came into that first turn like a swarm of hornets, and the cloud of dust on that bend was like a wall. Jack went into that bend riding seventh, and came out riding fifth, and riding the groove.

Going down the backstretch, that black job seemed to be flying. He went past Hank Jordan's S.O. in that backstretch, and he was riding fourth.

In the lead, Gus Tobray and Damago were waging a private duel for the lead; two car-lengths behind, Fred Deutscher's Miller was holding the gap, losing nothing, gaining nothing. Jack was moving up on Fred, which meant he was moving up on all of them.

They went into the north in that order. They came out of it wide, still in that order, but Jack was moving up, moving up too fast.

I'd been so concerned about Jack's motives, I'd almost forgotten my baby's reputation. Jack was coming out of that bend about eight m.p.h. faster than sanity permitted, and the ebony deck was way up, reaching for timber.

He'll never make it, I thought. *Nobody's that good. He'll . . .*

He made it. He found traction, somewhere, and the Special shot down-track

like something out of a gun, and just screamed past Fred's S.O.

In one lap, Jack had climbed from seventh to third. If he'd lost anything in the five years, it wasn't showing from where I stood. Unless it was his sanity.

They spanned the south, the three of them, in the same order. Jack made his bid in the back alley again. He made it the same split second Gus dropped behind Ted, and he caught them both napping.

He rode into the north alone. He rode into it holding the lead. It had been a very inspired piece of wheeling, everything considered, and I was proud of him.

BESIDE me in the pits, Red said. "He was always tops in my book. And it looks like he hasn't forgotten anything."

"He's got the car, too," I said. "She's acting like a lady."

"For the first time in her life she's got a Grade-A man handling her," Red said.

"You're forgetting some good boys," I argued.

"I'm forgetting nobody," Red said. "Nobody."

Jack went on, making a farce of this race, souping that ebony go-buggy way beyond the track limit, putting ever-increasing yardage between him and the field.

Maybe Red was right. Maybe that black beauty had been too hot for those other boys, including Tommy. She was a lot of car, and Jack was a lot of driver. I'd almost forgotten how good a driver he was.

In seventh place, the number one Federation man for last year was just going through the motions. Chips Malone would have to live on his appearance money; he was out of this race.

Jack lapped him, in the twelfth mile. Lapped him, and then seemed to deliberately slow down, in front of him, as though daring him to make a race of it. That didn't seem like Jack, to me.

I looked at Red, to get his reaction. He was watching it, all right, and there was a frown on his broad face. But he said nothing. He went over to stand near the fence, to check the water and gas cans. He looked uncomfortable. Red doesn't like to be puzzled.

Jack won by almost a half lap over Gus Tobray.

There was a twenty mile consolation, after that, and we weren't in it. But we were in the fifty mile feature.

It was composed of the first four cars in each of the three previous races, voiding duplications, so as to make it a twelve car melee. Because Gus and Ted were duplications, it brought Chips into the first four with his showing in the opener.

He was the only driver there who'd received appearance money, and he had qualified for the feature just because of a technicality. That wasn't the kind of situation that was going to make him popular with the fans, or the boys.

Jack had the pole in the fifty. I told him, "Run your own race. After what you've showed me today, I can't think of any advice you'd need."

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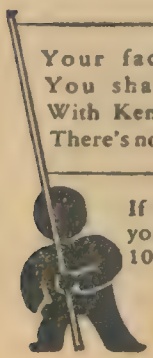

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"I'm too old to blush," he said. "I looked all right, huh?"

"You didn't look like a dry cleaner," I said. Then, after a second of indecision, "You were kind of heckling Chips, after you lapped him, weren't you?"

Jack met my look squarely. "He's the top man, isn't he? The way I feel, I'd like to tangle with the top man. Sort of a test, you know."

"He was the top man, last year," I admitted. "I—thought you were maybe—rubbing it in a little."

Jack's lower jaw jutted out a fraction of an inch or so. "It's a rough game," he said. "We both know that, Walt." Then he grinned, but not happily. "I thought you said I didn't need advice."

"O.K.," I said. "I—think a lot of Chips Malone. Maybe I worry about him too much."

And maybe, I thought, *if you heckle Chips enough, he will step out to tangle.* That's when things happen, when it gets personal. It's what breeds crack-ups.

Jack had the pole and Jack had the car. It was his grind, right from the start. He fought off all challenges from the first turn nightmare on. There wasn't anybody in that field with the savvy or the equipment to take him that day.

The track had started to get rough, and the dust was settling over the stands, the infield. Up near the top rail, that ridge of treachery was forming on the bends. The bends were no place to pass now, not on the outside.

Jack didn't have to worry about passing anybody until twenty-five laps had spun by. Jack was out in front, and going away. What few laggards there'd been up to there had gone to the pits.

In the twenty-sixth mile, Jack lapped one of the local lads, catching him in the grandstand alley, without a fight. He lapped two more in the next ten miles. He was traveling faster than he needed to for maintaining his top spot. But the fans weren't kicking about that. It was speed they'd come to see, and he was delivering.

In the fortieth mile, he caught up to Chips. Chips had been doing a little better in this grind. Jack started to lap him in the backstretch.

Chips met the challenge. His red speedster seemed to spurt, and they were batting toward the north bend hub and hub, Jack on the outside.

They were really logging as they went into the haze of the north. I saw a flash of red in that haze, and the number *9* on the black deck going high.

I didn't see any more until they came sliding out, into the front lane. Chips had the groove; Chips led them out.

For seven laps, they made a show of it. The track was bumpy, the haze was murder, the pace they were setting was out of this world. For seven laps, the fans were up, and jittery.

Next to me, in the pits, Red said, "That looks like the old Chips out there now. But he's up against the master."

I wasn't listening. I was remembering Jack's, *"I'd like to tangle with the top man."*

Why? I wish I knew why.

Seven laps, and Chips had had enough. The black job went on, and on; the red job dropped back and back.

Red said, "Looks like he quit."

I was glad he had. I wanted to believe in Jack, but I was glad Chips had quit. My heart began to pump steadily again.

Jack looked like a coal heaver when he came into the pits. When he took off his helmet, there was a clean line right beneath his hair line.

"That was better," he said. "Had some competition there." He wasn't smiling.

"Fulton next," I said, and no more.

CHAPTER III

HOODOO HEAP

FULTON was an odd-sized dish, a three-quarter mile layout, nicely banked. Art Cefalu runs the plant, and I hadn't seen Art in nine years.

"Same old Walt," he said. "Too big for a man and too small for a horse."

"Same old gag," I said, "and I remember where you read it. How's business, Art?"

"I'm eating," he said. "I've been hearing about your boy. Did pretty well at

Allenton, the fellows were saying."

"Well enough," I said.

"Stories floating around about that." He looked at me closely.

"Stories always floating around in this business," I told him.

"Sure. Well, I'm a great admirer of Chips Malone. He isn't asking for any appearance money here, Walt."

"Maybe he figures on earning some," I answered. "Don't worry about Chips, Art."

He was still studying me. Finally, he said, "O.K. Remember those pictures you took of my old Stutz? You still got them?"

We spent the next hour in remembering, and then I went to the pits. Stories certainly get around in this business, I thought. But again, there was that scratching at my mind, some memory that wanted to come to life but didn't. At my age, a guy should catalogue his memories; there's too many of them.

Jack and Red were in the pits, fiddling with the carburetors. Jack thought she starved out a little when he really wound her up, and he wanted every RPM she could deliver.

She already had too much moxie for this track, a fact which I mentioned.

"You talk like an old man, Walt," Jack said, "and you're not even eighty."

"You talk like a kid of eighteen," I said, "which would put you back twenty years, if I can count."

Jack just grinned, and for the first time, there was some happiness in his grin. "Should see some action, here," he said. "If your heart's O.K., Walt, you watch the action here."

I saw some action. This Chips was coming out of his shell. In the fifteen miler, a twenty lap run on this oval, Jack and Chips tangled from the tenth lap on.

From where I stood, it didn't look like Chips was quite up to his last year's level. But he gave Jack a bad time of it from the tenth lap until the nineteenth. Then the red job slowed some, and Jack won by nearly a quarter lap.

Jack had a strange smile on his face when he came into the pits. He seemed to be miles away. "He quit, didn't he?" he asked.

"I don't know," I said.

"It's that last lap that throws him," Jack said. "That spell anything to you, Walt?"

"I'm not too bright," I said. "What does it spell to you?"

He didn't answer. He was rubbing the back of his neck, his eyes miles away.

Then I realized. It had been in the last lap at Springfield that Tommy had gone into the concrete wall.

"Jack," I said, "what the hell are you thinking?"

He looked at me, and his eyes were perfectly blank. "I'm thinking I'd like a drink of water." He climbed from the car and headed for the jug.

I went over with him. I said, "There've been too many stories floating around, Jack. All the boys seem to know what's going on. There's some *bad* talk floating around."

He poured a paper cup full of water. "Think Chips heard it?"

"I do."

"Maybe that's why he came to life then. Maybe he'll step out and *really* tangle with me one of these days."

"That's what you want?"

He looked at me steadily. "Nothing like competition to keep a man young and on his toes. How long have you known me, Walt?"

"About twenty years."

"We ought to be friends, by now. If you don't want me behind the wheel, just say so."

"We're friends," I said. "I can't think of anybody I'd rather have driving for me."

"That's it, then," he said. "I don't run your life. You don't run mine."

Then they were lining them up for the first of three thirty milers, and we were trundling the black two stick into position.

Chips wasn't going to tangle with Jack in any of them, I learned. The red job had burned a valve. I wondered if maybe that's why he'd slowed, that last lap. Maybe the valve had started to act up. But there'd been no indication of it from the pits.

Jack looked like a champ in the two thirty milers we'd entered. He won the first, and got beat in the second last lap on the other. Gus Tobray beat him and

Gus did the best driving of his life to do it.

When he came in, Jack said, "A couple of old-timers. Gus must be as old as I am. We showed these kids, huh?"

The scratching started again, but nothing came, nothing. . . .

Jack said, "Springfield next."

I looked at him. I hadn't thought he'd wanted to go there. I didn't. But as he'd said, I'd known him twenty years.

"Springfield next," I agreed.

Well promoted, well maintained, well financed, this Springfield. One mile of the fastest dirt in the country, and offering purses that attracted the best.

SPRINGFIELD started the memories again, but the memory I wanted wouldn't come. I wasn't even sure it was important; I just know it kept bothering me, like some silly song you want to remember, but can't.

I kept telling myself I never should have come; this was one spot I'd planned to avoid. But here I was, and here were all the top grit jockeys in the game.

So maybe Jack and Chips wouldn't get a chance to tangle. Maybe these boys would keep them back in the ruck. Jack was no kid, and Chips wasn't what he'd been. Maybe they wouldn't even show here.

I don't know how a man can fool himself that badly, or try to. After what Jack had shown me, after what Chips had started to show me at Fulton, there shouldn't have been any doubts in my mind about their places in fast company.

A ten, a fifteen, two twenty-fives and a fifty. One hundred and twenty-five miles of speed and thrills, come one, come all.

They came. They filled the stands and overflowed into the infield; the joint was crawling with customers. The day was warm, but humid and cloudy. Ideal for carburetion.

I saw Chips before the first race, and he looked different. His old cockiness wasn't back, but he looked young again, and confident. He looked like he might be out to try, today.

In our pits, Red looked nervous. "I've got the willies," he told me. "You think it's the heat?" Red likes to think he's got the makings of a fortune teller.

"Must be the heat," I said.

Jack was sitting on the fence, staring out across the track. I thought he was staring at that concrete wall protecting the stands, but maybe I was imagining it.

The ten miler was mostly local talent, and it was a scramble all the way, with what looked like a hippodrome finish, three cars coming down on the checkered flag hub and hub.

The fans loved it.

We were running in the fifteen, and so was Chips. Jack was on the inside in the second row, Chips on the outside in the third. Fred Deutscher had the pole; Fred's Miller had that one sewed up from the jump-off.

Gus was riding next to him, and Gus gave him just enough of a battle to effectively block the track. Directly behind them, Chips and Jack rode, waiting their chance.

It was one of those things. Jack made a bid twice, and each time the bend loomed before he had the stuff to get by. Each time he dropped back on the bend, as Gus and Fred fought it out.

In the last lap, Chips made his bid. It was a wild, desperate attempt, born of impatience, and he didn't slow as the three of them barreled into the south together.

Then I saw the red job drifting up track, and it looked like the timber for sure, this time.

It stopped short of the rail, nose headed down-track, through some miracle of handling. He found traction too, but not until two cars had shot past on the lower track.

He finished in sixth place, a good half lap behind the winner, Fred Deutscher, nearly that much behind Jack. But he'd been in there, trying. If he hadn't tried for the lead, he'd have finished third or fourth.

Red said, "That was awful close. I thought that was it."

"How could you tell, without your crystal ball?" I asked him.

Jack was chugging in now, and down a ways, Chips' red job was pulling in. There was a streak of paint on the deck

of the red car. White paint, from the fence.

Jack was looking annoyed. "You'd think that Tobray was driving a truck," he said. "He can't make it, and nobody else can, because he's trying."

"Gus is old," I said, and grinned at him. "Like you."

"We'll see how old I am," he said.

He wasn't in the first twenty-five. But Chips was. Chips took the lead somewhere around the seventeenth mile, after a two lap duel with Harry Scully. For three laps after that, Harry trailed him by no more than a car length, at any time.

Then that red job seemed to take wings. Chips went on, adding to the daylight between them, goosing his baby up into a suicide pace he didn't need, but the fans loved.

He won by a solid half lap.

Jack said, "Last lap jitters, again. He cut the pace, that last lap."

"I didn't notice it," I said. "But if he had any sense, he would. The race was won."

"Hang onto your hat," Jack said, "and I'll show you how to win a race. The next one."

I didn't have a hat to hang on to, so I hung onto the fence, most of that fracas. Chips wasn't in it, for which I was grateful. Jack took the lead in the third lap, took it on the north turn, on the *outside,* and from there on, I could only watch parts of it.

I don't know what he was trying to prove. I do know he made them all look bad, all of them. But, of course, Chips wasn't in it.

When he came in, I said, "It's your neck, but it's *my* equipment. Kind of remember that, huh?"

When he came in, I said, "It's your neck, but it's my equipment. Kind of remember that, huh?"

"Yes, sir," he said, and his eyes were bright. He looked all wound up.

Then one of the mechs in the next pit said, "Rod Avery wants to know if you'll come down to his pit for a minute, Walt?"

I went down there.

Rod was looking worried, and his eyes searched mine. "What's up, Walt?" he asked me.

"I don't get you, Rod," I said.

"I won't put it any clearer than that. You know what we were talking about."

"I don't know what he's thinking," I answered. "I don't know what anybody's thinking, unless they talk."

Then Chips was there, looking as wound up as Jack. "What's the difference?" he said tightly. "He doesn't scare me."

Rod said, "Easy, Chips. I'm thinking about you, in this."

"I'll drive your car, or get somebody else's," Chips said flatly. "That's the way it is, Rod."

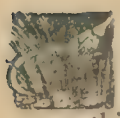
Rod sighed, and looked at me.

I said, "I've strung along with Jack so far. He'll be driving in the fifty, Rod."

"So will I," Chips said.

CHAPTER IV

FULL THROTTLE



I LEFT them, then. I went back to our pit, where Red and Jack were checking the skins on the Special. I didn't say anything to either of them.

I was wondering if my first mistake hadn't been made back in North Hollywood, the day Jack walked into the office. I was twenty-four hundred miles, and some months from that day now, and as I'd told Rod, I'd strung along with Jack all the way.

Maybe everything had been leading up to this day, to this hour. And maybe not. But if this *was* the climax, it was in my hand. I held the decision; it was my car Jack was wheeling.

They were lining them up for the fifty now. Red and Jack were looking at me, waiting for me. I went over to help them push the Special into position.

A couple pits down, the red job was coming out of Rod Avery's pit. And Chips was behind the wheel.

I thought Jack was smiling, but it wasn't a big enough smile for me to be sure.

I said, "No more of that stuff you showed in the twenty-five. Just winning will be enough."

He nodded.

Jack had the pole, Chips flanked him. Behind them, some of the best men and best equipment the game afforded. *Behind* them, though, and I had a hunch most of them would stay behind those two. Unless, of course, something happened.

In this business, just about anything can happen.

They didn't look at each other, those two. Lot of years between them, but even in this field, they'd be tops. I wouldn't know which one to pick, if I had to choose between them.

They used a pacemaker car for this one, a swank convertible. All the motors were running now, the starter was standing in the convertible, the green flag furled in his hand.

All ready, and the pacemaker edged forward, leading the line. For a brief moment the sun came out, glinting off the bright decks, all the colors like a rainbow, as the twelve cars, two abreast, went humming into the south.

Then the sun went into hiding again, as they filed into the backstretch, the pace lifting a little, flame tipping a tail pipe here and there, the motor noise higher, the smell of dust and burning oil heavy in the humid air.

Into the north and out of it. Into pay-off alley, the boys jockeying a little now for position. Tension rose with the rising pace, and the thunder of those twelve motors matched the day.

Jack and Chips, hub and hub, leading the parade. Neither gaining nor losing a foot, wary and careful, waiting for the signal that would release the avalanche.

Past the pits, hub and hub, the starter watching, the pace smart.

The green flag dropped, the pacemaker swung sharply up-track, out of the way of that stampeding herd.

The red job and the black job lunged

at the same split-second, and fought it out, into the south. Behind them, the rest funneled into the turn, jockeying for the rail, fighting for the groove.

Jack had the rail, and the advantage. Jack brought the D.O. out first, Chips riding higher, almost riding his right rear skin.

Chips made a bid in the backstretch. He pulled up nearly even, and they paced it out through the rear lane. Into the north, and Chips was high, a fan of grit went cascading from his rear wheels as the red job fought for traction, as centrifugal force pulled his deck high.

Dust billowed up, screening them for a second, then cleared. Jack was still leading; Chips was under control. Dust again, and they came sliding out into the front lane.

For ten laps, that was the pattern. The track had seen seventy-five miles of churning wheels before this race got under way. The track was rough, and the bends were no place to make a bid, or to finish one made in the stretch. Chips knew that.

He saved his challenges for the stretches, and he didn't have enough, quite, to finish them there. Ten laps, and one car had already come into the pits.

The rest of them were strung all around the track, and the dust was getting heavier.

Red said, "Those guys must think they're out there alone."

"I ought to flag Jack in," I said. "They're both crazy."

But I didn't. The laps went on, with no let-up apparent in either machine. Fifteen, then twenty, twenty-five, thirty miles.

Walking a tight-rope of disaster, both of them, the scream of their motors like a personal challenge, the bends getting hazier and heavier.

In the front lane, on the thirty-second lap, they came blasting out of the turn to find Al Pritchard on the rail. Jack went wide, to go by, and Chips went wide of Jack.

Chips went up into the heavy dirt, and the red buggy seemed to leap at that concrete wall.

How he caught command in time, I'll never know. The stands were screaming; the pits were silent as death.

He manhandled her clear, losing yardage, but saving his neck. He moved past Al, and chased Jack past the pits, while a sigh went up, while the boys in the pits shook their heads.

That should take the starch out of him, I thought. That should scare some sense into him. I thought wrong. Jack had fifty feet on him, but Chips was eating it up, closing the gap.

And in the backstretch, another laggard, and Jack went wide. Jack went wide into the bend, too, and it was the black baby reaching for timber, this time.

The laggard was wide, too, crowding him. Below, Chips found a hole next to the rail, and Chips went by.

He came out of the bend, riding the top spot, with a thirty foot lead on Jack.

Jack ate that up, in a hurry. In two laps, Jack was crowding Chips' deck. But Chips had the groove now, and Chips had the car to stand off any challenge in the stretch.

If Jack wanted to go around, that was his business, but it would be a bad one. It was like a game of tag, and Jack was it. Like playing tag on the edge of a cliff.

Forty laps, forty-five.

THE stands were silent. Everybody was silent, including yours truly, who'd been in this game over thirty-five years. It was like watching some stage play, some tragedy shaping up.

Forty-six, forty-seven, forty-eight.

Treacherous track, and too fast a pace. Jack riding so close to Chips, it looked like one car. Some beautiful handling out on that sea of disaster. Beautiful to watch, if you didn't think beyond that.

Forty-nine laps, and this was it. If Jack wanted this one, he'd have to do it in the one mile left to him. Unless Chips got those "last lap jitters" again. There was no sign of it I could see.

The south, and Chips leading. Into it and out of it, and Jack made a bid there in the rear alley. Edging up, moving wide, climbing up to Chips' deck, the center of the car, moving by, inch by inch.

But the north turn loomed, and he'd have to drop back. They were nose and nose into the north. Just dust, and nobody in the park knowing what was happening in that haze. Nobody but the two concerned.

The fans were on their feet; there wasn't one pair of eyes that could leave the cloud on the north turn.

They came out of it, with Chips leading by a foot. But the red car was fighting inertia, crowding up toward the slope, crowding the black job, too.

They were both drifting higher, fight it though they did. I was holding my breath, and Red's hand was gripping my arm, as they drifted toward that concrete wall, in front of the stands, down there.

If Chips was going to quit, now would be the time. That was the spot where Tommy had been killed, and now . . .

Chips didn't quit, nor did Jack. Both pairs of wheels found forward traction, and they came out of it together, battling toward the checkered flag, under full gun.

I took a deep breath of air, and leaned back against the fence, my knees rubber. Red's hand slid off my arm, and the arm ached.

Chips went by, as the flag dropped. Chips went by leading Jack by five feet.

"Your crystal ball was off, Red," I said.

He nodded. "They're a sweet pair," he said, "but one like that is enough for me."

Jack came chugging in, later, with a smile on his face, a real smile this time.

I started to say something, but he jumped from the car. "I want to go down and congratulate that kid," he said. "He's all right."

Red and I both stared at him, as he headed down toward Avery's pit. We watched while he broke through the crowd around the red car, and we saw them shake hands.

When he came back, he looked ten years younger. "He's cured now," he said. "I can tell."

"Why don't you make some sense?" I said.

He sort of sighed, and looked down at his big hands. "You've got a short memory, haven't you, Walt?"

"I don't know, have I?"

"Don't you remember Allenton?"

"I ought to. We opened there."

"I mean—do you remember *fifteen years ago* at Allenton?"

I thought and said, "Sure. Lanny Calvin was killed there, fifteen years ago this summer. I remember it well. He was a great boy. But—"

"You remember any rumors, Walt, about that?"

That's the thing I'd been trying to remember, but it had been too dim. "You were riding next to him," I said, "and I remember there was some talk. But nothing I'd care to listen to."

"There was some talk," Jack said grimly. "There was almost enough talk to drive me out of the game, the only game I knew or wanted. There were a few rough characters who made an issue of it, on the track. I got so—so mad and scared, both, I forgot the rumors. I cured myself, or they cured me. I don't know."

"And that's why you were playing the heavy now? You took an awful chance, Jack."

"Sure. When Chips came to me at Springfield, he told me he was thinking of quitting. A boy like that, one of the best in the game—quitting. I had to dig pretty deep, I figured, to bring him back to life. I can only say—it worked."

I put a hand on his shoulder, and could think of nothing appropriate to say. Finally, I said, "And now you'll be quitting, I suppose?"

"Quit?" He stared at me. "You crazy? After the licking he just gave me? Maybe he's the best, and maybe he's not, Walt. I aim to find out, this summer. This is the life."

Drivers . . . Who can figure racing drivers? Not me.

JURAMENTADOS OF JOLO

A FACT STORY

By Colonel William E. Haseltine

IN THE year 1911, General John J. Pershing, then governor of the Moro Province, decided to disarm the turbulent Moros of the Island of Jolo. As many as possible were induced to turn in their weapons and then the Americans went after the recalcitrants.

As a preliminary to this campaign it was necessary to have roads by which all parts of the island could be reached. At that time there was no real road in the island except that between the town of Jolo and nearby Asturias Barracks. Captain Paul S. Bond, then Engineer of the Moro Province, was charged with the duty of locating and building the roads.

Jolo is a small island, some 325 square miles, with but one town of any importance, Jolo, the capital. Other towns are Parang and Maibun, the latter the residence of the Sultan of Sulu.

The Moros are Mohammedans, and the Jolo Moros included a fanatical group called "Juramentados" who swear an unpleasant oath to die killing a white Christian. They assume that they are thereby admitted at once to the "Seventh Heaven" without the dull experience of passing through the six intermediate heavens. To guard against these savages it was necessary that the survey and construction parties be protected by armed guards.

One of the favorite camping places during the road survey was a locality called Crater Lake in the crater of an extinct volcano. This place was less than a mile from the seashore and it was the custom for members of the party to go to the shore for a swim early in the morning or late in the afternoon. There was a rule that they should venture out of camp only in parties of five armed men or more. Arms were then stacked on the shore while the men went into the water.

The rule as to an armed party was too often "honored in the breach." On one occasion Lieutenant Vernon Whitney of the Philippine Constabulary, one of the guards, started toward the shore attired only in a kimono and chinelas (Chinese sandals), alone and unarmed. Whitney was a young man, in his twenties, perhaps 6′ 2″, weighing about 190 pounds, very powerful and active.

As he was passing through a glade in the jungle he was suddenly attacked by three armed Moros. One carried a kampilan (two handed sword); the others were armed with kris with blades like the "flaming Sword." Whitney acted immediately and with his characteristic courage and skill. Throwing off his kimono and chinelas, he stepped in to the man with the kampilan and with a heavy blow to the jaw knocked him senseless.

As the Moro fell the kampilan flew into the air where Whitney caught it. Without turning around he looked over his shoulder and aimed a powerful backhand blow at the second Moro, completely severing his head in one stroke.

At this juncture, the third Moro decided to retreat. Not that he was afraid —the juramentados are fearless—but he evidently concluded that he would not reach the "Seventh Heaven" via Lieutenant Whitney armed with a kampilan. He started to run. Whitney easily overtook him and with the kampilan, now in both hands, struck him a savage blow just to the left of the neck, cleaving through his collar bone and on into his ribs. The Moro fell to the ground, and was dispatched by a second blow.

By this time, the first Moro was beginning to show signs of returning consciousness. Whitney returned to attend to him and chopped off his head. He then gathered up all the weapons and returned to camp.

Following this episode, Captain Bond intervened to prevent punishment at court-martial of Whitney who expressed his appreciation by presenting the captain with the weapons of the conflict.

By JOHN PRESCOTT

Talbot didn't say a word—he just stood there a minute, and then he threw the birds on the ground.

THE JUDGE AND THE IRISH

ILLUSTRATED BY DANIEL PIERCE

WELL, sir, ever since the Judge retired and stepped down from the bench over at the county seat I've had to keep a close eye on him. And every so often it gets to be quite a chore; him being a widower and there just being the two of us rattling around in that place of his back off the highway about ten miles from the Port.

When I first came out there to work for him, take care of the house, the dogs, farm a little and keep the place spruced up, it was all right; he was over at the Port then, all day, sitting up on the bench handing out judgments on this and that, trying to look real stern and legal in his worn robe, but for the most part being a sort of benevolent old character; wild white hair, ruddy face, string tie and all. He sounds like a type, but when you hear what happened you won't think so.

It was all right then, because by the time that wheezy Ford of his brought him home in the evening he was too tuckered out to do much more than go down to the kennel and talk to the dogs a little—that man's crazy about dogs. He'd get all absorbed down there and forget about the time and pretty soon I'd have to go down and bring him on up for supper.

I always knew where to find him in those days and I always knew what he was up to. I kind of miss them now. His getting retired that way is sort of like having a Sioux or an Apache on my hands; and it reached a climax this fall. He got all out of hand, he did; completely. And came dang close to going on county relief doing it.

As you might know, the whole thing occurred over a dog. Like I said, he's crazy about dogs, and I guess in his time he's had about fifty or more of 'em; all breeds, shapes, colors and sizes. He wasn't particular about that at all; he'd

pick 'em for their spirit and what there is in their eyes—and too, just because he liked 'em. He had a way with 'em all right, and whenever he'd reach down and pat a dog's flank, or hold its forefeet in his big hands and smile at it, why, that dog would just quiver with delight all over down to the end of its tail. They just seemed to understand each other.

But this particular dog I'm talking about was different; this dog was a real patrician, a shining light in a dark room. I knew it myself the first time I saw it, and when I looked at the Judge's face I saw something there I'd never seen before. It made me kind of sick and loose inside because I like that man more than anyone alive. I saw in that instant that he wanted that dog more than anything else in the world, and there was no way I could see that he could ever have it. No honest judge ever made that kind of money in this county.

WE WERE up in the back orchard that day. The Judge has about sixty acres or so stretching back from the highway, and most of it's fairly level; except for the orchard—real apple orchard. That's on a nice rise, just in back of the buildings, and whenever we took glasses up there we could see ten miles or more in any direction if it wasn't too hazy. We could see the length and breadth of the Judge's land, all the way down to where the creek bubbles through the pasture, and into the thick, second-growth timber beyond his fence-line. You couldn't see far into that, though, because it's thick in there, and all undergrowth and briars and burrs. And partridge, too; nice birds.

Over to the north, that would be to the left of where we were sitting that day, we could see Chan Talbot's land and buildings. That Talbot outfit only recently went country-fied; and they did it in a big way. Old Chan made a lot of money over at the Port in some swindle or other, and his wife, a fat old sort of a witch, talked him into being a country gentleman—a hard thing for him. She had an idea she wanted to go through life wearing jodhpur boots and sitting around on one of those little seats you stick into the ground. She didn't do so well on that, though; kind of sagged over.

Well, once he caught onto it he liked it. Those Talbots bought up a lot of land right next to the Judge's and started to build. That took some nerve, I thought, because everyone in that family, and their numbers were considerable, had all been up before the Judge at one time or other; speeding mostly, and wild living. Chan even wanted to get a fat slice of the Judge's creek-land, but the Judge wouldn't have anything to do with that at all. The Judge didn't have much land, and he surely needed what there was of it.

When they really got their place going those Talbots branched out in more directions than you could think of. They got to be real perfectionists. That's what the Judge called 'em; that's his word. They got blood horses by the dozen; not one or two at a time, but all at once, like a summer rainstorm in the night, and they were forever running them around one of those little race tracks over beyond their buildings. And they went to every horse show in the nearest five counties; and some that weren't that close. They got horsey with a vengeance.

But the Judge didn't pay 'em much heed until they went in for dogs—wholesale. They did that all of a sudden too, and they had the best. Then he got all interested, because that's his line; only not in any way like it was to those Talbots. But he got interested just the same, and off and on he'd take to sitting up there in the orchard with the glasses glued on the kennel. There were some beautiful dogs in that kennel, believe me; and sometimes I thought they had 'em mostly to spite the Judge.

Well, we were sitting up there on the rise, nice and comfortable in the afternoon, looking at Chan's buildings and watching the sun pour in a golden flood across his fields. I was kind of drowsy and warm and I was thinking of the new apple crop I was going to press into cider, when all of a sudden the Judge gave a short little grunt like he'd been poked in the stomach.

He had the glasses up and he was looking way down deep into Chan's cornfield; so I couldn't see his eyes. But I could see the rest of him, all tensed forward, with the line of his jaw hard and solid like it used to get when he was going to fine a chicken-thief or a Talbot; and the skin on his face not red and loose, but tight and kind of pale—not like him at all.

"I'll be damned," he said. He isn't a swearing man, the Judge. He gets salty now and then, but in a clean way. And he wasn't swearing then; not exactly. It was more reverent than anything. "I'll be damned," he said again. "Look at that dog, Joey."

I was just then getting the first part of that queasy feeling and I pulled my back away from one of the apple trees and hunched forward to look down toward where he had the glasses aimed. There wasn't much I could see at first in the butter yellow of the fields, and I had to wink a few times in the brightness of it.

"That's a real dog, Joey," the Judge said. "Just watch him move."

I guess that's when I saw him; when he moved. Only it didn't look like a dog at first. It was more like an arrow, a red arrow that skimmed across the golden ground and rose to a sculptured point; just like an arrow strikes into an oak; *thuk!* It took root right there in the ground, red coat all shimmering like fire, head thrust forward and tail straight out and streaming crimson pennants in the breeze.

"What an Irish."

I don't know who said that. It might have been the Judge and it might have been me. It didn't sound like the Judge, though, and I'm sure it wasn't me because I could feel my throat all tightened up inside, as though I was turned to clay or stone just from the sight of that dog.

The big red Irish was still holding his point, and then something else moved into the picture. It was Chan Talbot, and he must have been there all the time but the image of the dog had been so compelling that I hadn't noticed him. He came up close behind the dog with a gun; and it was all like a silent movie or one of those nickel flicker boxes, watching the gun come up, the dog explode into the corn shocks, and the pheasant burst into the air in a flurry of blurred motion.

I WATCHED the pheasant climb and saw the puff of smoke snap away from the gun barrel. The dog waited, and even from the rise of the orchard I could feel the trembling and anticipation that went through those red lines; and then, as though released from a catapult, it arched low over the ground and scooped the bird back to Chan Talbot's feet.

Yes, sir, I was looking at a real dog.

"Come on, Joey." And the Judge was more excited than I'd ever seen him; he was already on his feet and trundling off down the rise toward Talbot's fence-line in a real blaze of speed. When the Judge goes beyond a walk he's living dangerously.

I went after him, stumbling along be-

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neath the low tree branches and down the incline of rough ground beyond the edge of the orchard. It was about a quarter of a mile over to where Chan and the big Irish had brought the bird down; and that just goes to show you how loose in the head a dog like that can make a man. The way the Judge started out he set a pace like a runner in the Wanamaker Mile.

But when we got to the fence-line he looked twice his age; way beyond his sixty-odd years. I caught up to him there and he was wavering around in front of the high boards trying to figure out some way to scrabble through to the other side. There was something pitifully anxious about it, and I wanted to reach out and grab his coat-tails and beat some sense into him; it would have done no good though. He'd seen that dog and there was no stopping him.

I guess I knew then that he really had to have that dog; and it was an odd thing because the closest he'd ever been to it was a quarter of a mile. But maybe that didn't make any difference; maybe there was something that just traveled through the air, like radio or telepathy or a strong scent when the breeze is right. He knew all there was to know about that Irish already, and there was no stopping him at all.

And it was a heartbreaker to watch. He'd never in God's time get enough money together to buy a blooded dog like that; and even if he did I wouldn't give more than even money that Chan would sell it to him. It would be just like Chan to dangle the Irish in front of the Judge; just dangle it and then snatch it away. He was that kind of man. The Judge knew it too, and he'd never before been on Chan's land; but he was acting just like a kid.

When we finally got through the fancy white board fence and went off across the cornfield we were going slower. We were going along at a decent walk, and my breathing was getting nearer normal; the Judge still sounded like a locomotive on a mountain grade.

And Chan Talbot was standing there in the middle of his field waiting for us. Don't mistake me, he wasn't welcoming us, we weren't country society. He was simply standing there in a slick, new hunting outfit, all proud and disdainful, with a beautiful automatic twelve slung casually in the crook of his arm. There was no pleasure in that long, pale face of his; it was plain aloofness toward the common herd. It asked very pointedly just what in hell business we had on his land. Nothing neighborly about him at all.

But the dog now, he was different. That big red Irish had seen us from a long way off, and even before we got within speaking range I could tell by the carriage of his head and the sharp, almost ecstatic movements of his tail that he knew there was something special about the Judge. He was just like all other dogs in that respect; an easy fall guy. And if he knew it, it didn't bother him at all.

In fact he reveled in it, and when we were only about twenty feet away he bounded away from Talbot and placed himself squarely in front of the Judge, his big tail going like a hummingbird's wings and little yips of excitement bubbling up out of his throat. And the Judge got right down on his knees there in all that stubble, just like a kid, and took the red dog's head in his hands and began to massage it softly behind the ears. That did it. The Irish sat down and cooed.

I don't know just what sort of a reaction I'd expected out of Chan Talbot. In fact I'd been paying him little or no heed at all; I'd been watching the Judge. But Talbot kind of chuckled after a minute or so and drew my eye; and if I live to be a hundred I don't think I'll ever see a smile quite like that one again.

There was all devil in that smile; kind of gloating, just as though he'd been waiting a long while to maneuver the Judge into some sort of painful position, and finally had him. And in a way I guess he did. I never in my life saw the Judge make such a fuss over a dog; or unbend so much. And I guess Chan Talbot was just about surprised out of those shiny field boots.

But the Judge wasn't paying any attention to either of us. He was all wrapped up in the dog; and it was likewise with the big Irish. He was all for the Judge, he was, and there was nothing

else around there that interested him at all. They stayed right there on the ground talking to each other in a language that both of them understood. Talbot and I didn't mean a thing. I thought something like that might bother Talbot; but it didn't seem to. He just looked to me like he was enjoying himself hugely.

"That's quite some dog you got there, Talbot," the Judge said after a minute or two. He was creaking up from his knees and the Irish was still sitting there under his hand getting his neck rubbed and making soft noises in his throat.

"Yes," Talbot said grandly. He was still smiling; he was getting a lot of pleasure out of the whole thing. "He's a champion, all right; two years old and cost me eighteen hundred dollars. Got a pedigree as long as my fence-line. Only had him a month and he's already taken four blues. Going to take some more this month."

I JUST knew Talbot couldn't help but tell us how much he'd paid for the Irish. It seemed to me his tongue sort of lingered on that a little. It hadn't missed the Judge either I could see. He looked about as bleak as a man with his complexion could; but he covered up fast.

"Oh, show dog," the Judge said, and he got down close to the Irish again and ran his hands along that mahogany coat. It was all polish, like brushed silk threads and there wasn't a mark or a flaw in it. "Well, then, I guess he isn't much of a hunter."

"What's that?" Talbot's voice was sharp and I could tell that the Judge had introduced a discordant note into things; almost as though he'd taken a slap at Talbot himself. "Not a hunter? You saw him point that pheasant, didn't you? That's why you came running down here, isn't it? That dog's a champion in all respects; he's the best hunter in these parts."

Well, sir, I don't know what the Judge was getting at; no way of ever telling what's going on in a mind like his. That legal work sends a man's thinking off on strange and unusual paths. One minute he's just about making love to that Irish and the next he's hinting around that the dog's no good for anything but show. And he knew better too; he'd seen that pheasant brought down. No dog around here had ever done that well before. It was simply involuntary motion with that Irish. He was born to it.

But the Judge didn't seem to be interested in the Irish any more. He was standing with his hands on his hips, knees all covered with straw and grass and he was looking out from beneath his hatbrim way off in the distance. He looked things over down there toward the creek and beyond that into the deep second-growth, and then he swung slowly around until he was looking back up toward the orchard rise and his own buildings.

And the Irish looked up at him curiously, head slightly to one side and his tail making doubtful pats on the ground. But the Judge didn't pay him any heed, and after a minute he turned around again and scratched thoughtfully in amongst the white hairs at the back of his head.

"Talbot," he said, "I don't think your Irish here is all that you claim him to be. He looks like he might be a nice enough hunter all right, and I'll admit he looked pretty good on that pheasant. But, you know, I have a dog or two up there in my kennel that might be able to teach your red Irish a thing or two."

"Ridiculous," Chan Talbot said; and I would have said it too except that I liked the Judge and felt sorry for him. I don't know what got into him to say a thing like that; he didn't have a blood dog in the kennel. I guess love makes a man rave some; and he sure had it for that Irish.

"Ridiculous," Chan Talbot said again. "You must be out of your mind. I got this dog fully trained. This dog will hunt rings around any of that rag-tag lot you got up there." And you know, he was speaking the truth, much as I hated to hear it from a man like that.

But that didn't seem to bother the Judge. He was wearing his best legal frown and he was making little cluckings way back in his throat. He was thinking.

"Seems to me," he said in a moment. "Seems to me I've got a dog up in there that ought to look pretty good out hunting. Maybe I ought to bring that dog down here some time."

I certainly couldn't imagine what dog he could possibly be thinking of.

Talbot laughed. He had a nasty laugh, that man. "Well, you just bring him down here some time and let's have a look at him." His eyes drifted away from the Judge and made a far-away look toward the creek-land. He began to smile.

"If you're so sure of that," he went on, "we might arrange something. That land of yours now. I've made decent offers on that; maybe you feel sporting about it. Maybe you'd like to make some kind of a bet on this dog business."

Well, sir, the Judge backed down. And that's something I never saw him do before; and he backed down to Chan Talbot which made it just that much worse. He gave a fluttery kind of laugh; like a boy who got caught stealing apples.

"I don't know that he's that good, Talbot. He's no blood dog, like yours."

Talbot had a real belly laugh for himself that time. I guess he hadn't enjoyed himself so much in years.

"Listen, Smithies," he said. He never called the Judge by his title; none of those Talbots did. No respect. "Listen, Smithies, you bring that mutt of yours out here and put him up against my Irish, and for my part of it I'll put up the Irish himself. If he can't beat any of that outfit of yours he isn't worth having. And if what you've been saying isn't all eyewash, you'll put up something to back it up."

And, believe me or not, the Judge was still back-watering. He did it with a frown that time. It was his stalling frown. I've seen it a lot, but mostly in court and never anywhere when his honor was concerned. That's the way I saw it; he'd seen fit to open his mouth, and his honor was out there bare in that cornfield.

He was still at it when Chan Talbot stalked away, laughing fit to kill. The red Irish lagged some to keep an eye on the Judge, but the Judge didn't look up until they were well away. He looked up then, and smiled; would you believe it? And all the way back up to the house he kept humming a little tune.

WELL, sir, the Judge had a whole herd of dogs up there in his big wire kennel yard; that's the only word I can think of to describe it—a herd. He had near everything you could imagine up there, and a few that went somewhat beyond that; especially those that he would bring home from the pound over at the Port. He'd do that once a month, bring home those that hadn't been taken by other people. I heard one time that they hadn't used the gas chamber over there in a long while.

And I can believe it. But aside from having nearly every stray in the county up there he only had one or two that knew how to hunt; a dog named Sally was about the best of the lot, but being a sort of half-caste spaniel I couldn't see how in the Judge's wildest dreams he thought she might be able to stand up against that Irish. I guess the older some guys get the more they talk. You'd think a legal mind would be wary, but I guess the Judge was like the rest of them. He was up in his sixties, you know, and sometimes you just can't tell.

He got that Sally right out there the next morning and he put her to work. He actually seemed serious about something or other, but it was a comical thing to watch the two of them waddle on down from the rise and go on out into Chan Talbot's cornfield. That's where he went, right over to Talbot's cornfield; and I sure didn't understand that at all. You'd think he'd been laughed at enough without putting himself right out there in plain view of all of 'em.

I went up on the rise in the orchard to get a good look at him and with the glasses I could see him and Sally chasing pheasants down there. It really wasn't much of a performance. Sally was a fair enough dog, but I guess I was blinded by what I'd seen that Irish do; and I was unconsciously comparing the two.

They roamed around down there for an hour or so, bagged two and then drifted off toward the creek. I watched them cross it and go into the brush at the edge of the timber, and then I came down

off the rise and went back up to the house to fix some lunch. I'd spotted Chan Talbot out there by his horse track watching too; but by the time I left the orchard he'd already disappeared. I guess he wasn't really interested; he didn't stay long.

The Judge always took something with him when he went out like that alone and so I had lunch by myself; but afterwards I went back up there into the orchard. It was nice and warm up there, and in the sunlight I could see a long way off.

It wasn't long before the Judge came out of the timber. I thought he'd head right back up toward the house, but instead he kept along the stream until he came to Talbot's property, and then, by golly, he went back into that cornfield. But that time he had company; Chan and the Irish were down in there too. And Chan seemed to think Sally was the funniest thing he'd ever seen. I could see him almost doubled over down there in that field.

And he had every reason to, believe me. That Sally was a real fumbling fool alongside the red Irish. The Judge didn't stay down there long; just long enough to send Sally out for one bird, but I wish he hadn't. The Irish pointed one up too, just after Sally did, and the comparison between those two was about the saddest thing I ever did see. Alongside the Irish that Sally was something like a canine Falstaff. It was too bad the Judge stayed down there as long as he did, but I was glad it wasn't any longer.

When he came wheezing and puffing up the rise to the orchard I expected to see him realizing the folly of his ways; but do you know what that man was doing? He was smiling again. I got a real shock out of that; just like he'd slipped off the main line for sure. It got worse when he started talking.

"Joey," he said. "Joey, I think we're going to get that Irish. I think we're going to have that red dog right up here home with us where he belongs. I've been letting Talbot work himself onto the hook."

The Judge likes to tease me now and then, but I thought this was going too far.

"What are you going to do?" I asked. "Mortgage this place to the hilt? How do you ever expect to pay for that dog?"

"We're going to have a contest," the Judge said. "We're going to take Sally down here tomorrow and put her up against the Irish. If we bring in the most birds we get the Irish."

"Supposing it's the other way around, as it most certainly will be?" I asked. I just couldn't help getting sarcastic.

The Judge looked thoughtful, then; almost as though he hadn't considered that very seriously.

"Well, if that happens," he said, "which isn't likely, I'll give the creek-land to Talbot."

I guess I'd been afraid of that, but you can't argue with a man like that; the doctors all advise against it. It only makes them violent. If the Judge wanted to lose the richest piece of crop-land he had, I guess that was up to him. I didn't even argue; I just left him standing there and tottered off to the barn. It was too early to milk the cow, but it was nice and quiet down in there with only the sound of her munching the hay. There's

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FRUIT-A-TIVES

something nice about cows; they're kind of stupid and never have much to say. But I've yet to hear of one losing its mind.

IN THE morning Talbot was waiting for us with the Irish down there in his cornfield. In this seizure which the Judge had had, he'd agreed to meet Talbot down there at ten o'clock; and when he got there he was all set for the hunt.

So was that Irish. He looked more than beautiful that morning. He looked formidable. As long as the Judge was going to go through with that particular sort of insanity I found myself wishing that red dog would tumble into a trap somewhere and lose himself.

But he didn't look like he was going to do anything like that at all. He appeared to me like he was going to have the time of his life; and was sure impatient to get on with it. So was Chan Talbot; and he had that smile.

"Come on," he said. "Let's go. I want to get into town for lunch."

The Judge didn't say anything right away; he just smiled at the Irish and patted him, almost like he owned him already. That dog was a good deal more polite than his master, I'll say. He just sat there respectfully, looking up at the Judge and now and then glancing curiously at Sally. Nice manners. He was glad to see the Judge again, and his tail was making little flutters on the ground.

"Well, I guess we're ready if you are," the Judge said.

"Well, that's fine," Talbot said. He was enjoying things a great deal. I guess there's nothing he liked better than to bait the Judge. He had him in his pocket, all right, for my money, and he seemed sure anxious to push him in further. "Where do you want to hunt? My fields or yours? I got nice pheasant in mine."

The Judge put on that legal look again and cradled his gun carefully and swung his head around deliberately to look things over.

"I'll tell you, Talbot, I've kind of got my taste up for partridge. Had a good deal of pheasant already this season. What would you say if we just strolled through the woods a while?"

Well, sir, that was a dang lie; the Judge didn't have any taste for partridge at all, and the only reason he spent so much time hunting 'em was because he liked to send the birds to his friends over at the Port. But I'd given up on his mental acrobatics by then.

Talbot didn't look like he cared for partridge any more than the Judge did, and I got the idea from the way he hesitated at first that he probably wanted to stay right out there in the open where his whole family could look down into the field and see the beating he was giving the Judge. I knew he'd rather have it that way than hidden away in the woods. But maybe he felt sorry for the Judge; because it didn't take him but a second or two to make up his mind.

"You sure that whatever-it-is-of-yours won't get lost in there?" he asked. He leered at Sally, and she slid back a ways from him. A dog sure knows character.

"No," the Judge said. "I'll keep her close by. She'll be all right." He was just as serious as he could be, and for the first time I began to wonder if there was something about that whole thing that didn't quite meet the eye.

There was a sort of gentle incline going down toward the timber and we made it without much effort; but once in the woods it was slow going. That was the first I'd been back in there in some time, and I don't think it's ever been rougher in there before or since. It was all tangles and snarls and barbs; one minute I'd have something grabbing me around the ankle and the next something would be swishing past my face. I was like a man with the blind staggers in there, but I don't think I would have missed it for anything.

You'd think that sort of ground would tie the Judge up like a kitten in a ball of yarn; but that's the difference between a ship in drydock and one in the water. To watch the way he'd sometimes weave and totter around the ground outside his buildings or up on the orchard rise I'd wonder if he was going to make the grade. But back there in the second-growth he was like an Indian scout. He was as sure-footed as a deer, and he made

no more noise than one going through the brush.

When he got in a ways we split up with Talbot and the red Irish and agreed to meet them out by the creek in a clearing in two hours. We'd count the bag then.

They shoved off first, cutting to the left, with Talbot smashing into the brush in a big hurry and the Irish looking eager and stepping along carefully out to one side. That brought a kind of smile to the Judge, but I'm danged if I could see what there was to smile about.

WE GOT four birds in the first hour. They were all close shots and no trouble at all to bring down once Sally kicked them out. And Sally didn't seem so awfully bad in there, although she missed some we could have had. She stayed in close, almost under the barrel, and when she'd get them out you could almost bat them down with the gun butt. I never liked to have a partridge that close to me. They make such a God-awful racket when they shake loose that it always takes a minute or two for my pulse to get back to normal.

It was quiet in there mostly, and what sounds there were carried a long way. Every now and then I could hear Talbot's gun slam out way over left, the noise of it subdued and cushioned by the trees and brush. I counted six rounds in that first hour, two more than us; and I was getting in shape to just sit down there on some old stump and cry.

I kept seeing that creek-land in my mind's eye. I remembered how I'd planted it and plowed it and cut it; and I thought how I wouldn't be doing that any more. I could see one of those big, white Talbot fences all around it; they'd more than likely fence it in that way too. And probably let their fancy horses use it as pasture-land. They weren't farmers, those Talbots; they didn't know good growing land from bad.

I heard the big Irish sound off a couple of times too. He had some voice, that dog, clear as a bell; but it wasn't good hunting manners to go yelling through the woods that way. Every time I'd hear him I'd see the Judge smile a little, and I wondered what it was that made the dog yip that way.

We didn't do so well the second hour. We swung over to the right more, cutting a wide circle around and back toward the creek at the edge of the woods. Over that way I couldn't hear Talbot's gun at all, nor the Irish; and I got to feeling really jumpy because there was no way of even guessing how they were doing with the birds. My imagination got the best of me, I guess, and the two Sally kicked out in that hour looked small beside the pile my mind conjured up for Talbot. It didn't bother the Judge, though. He kept right on hunting, and smiling to himself now and then; just as though there was nothing in those woods but us two, Sally and the birds.

I guess if I'd known then what I learned later it would have been different, but the Judge is the only man I know who can set his eyes onto the future and chart things out. I guess he knew how everything was going to turn out all along.

We took it kind of easy toward the last; no cause to excite yourself or overdo, the Judge said—what's done is done. How do you like that? We came out of the woods toward the end of the second hour and worked back along the creek bed to the point where we'd gone in. The Judge walked along easy and confident, even stooped down once to pick some funny looking flower with a long green stem; he seemed in no hurry to get back at all.

And I just about had the screaming meemies: I was positive that Talbot would be bringing partridge out of there in baskets, and I don't know why I was in such a fever to get back there and see it; but I was. I guess I just wanted to rush right in there, kiss the creek-land good-bye and get it over with.

But, you know, it didn't turn out that way at all.

We got back to the clearing about the same time Talbot and the Irish came out. They came out together, but the Judge wasn't paying any attention to Talbot at all. He was looking at the dog, and that's the closest to tears I ever saw the Judge come.

(Continued on page 128)

ILLUSTRATED BY CHARLES DYE

PREY

By

EDWARD S. FOX

The mate sprang forward and hit Joe on the side of the jaw. "You fool, you want to get us blown out of the water?"

OUR ENGINES quit us just after eight bells, midnight. There was a sudden jar below decks and then the steady throb that is the very heartbeat of a ship, abruptly ended. Joe Mayer and I had just come off watch and we stood in the forward well-deck, tense, somehow hoping the sound would start up again.

It didn't. Instead, the hiss of water at our bow and along our sides died as the *Starling* slowly lost headway. We could hear muffled voices from the bridge over our heads and now we could hear a new sound, a sound that was plain in the sudden unnatural stillness, one we'd never before heard. It was the sound of other ships underway. It was the convoy passing all around us.

It was one of those damp, dark nights you'll find only at sea. Everything you touched was beaded with moisture. A light blinked over our heads, was answered briefly off in the darkness. We heard the mate's voice telling the watch to be on its toes.

Then McNair, the chief, came cursing on deck. He passed so close to us we could smell the grease and oil he brought with him from the engine-room. The sound of his cursing rose above our heads as he climbed the bridge ladder and we heard him say loudly, "Crankshaft couplings—busted clean off," then the wheelhouse door slammed and the rest, probably some choice string of epithets, abruptly ended.

Joe Mayer didn't say anything but I knew exactly what he was thinking. We waited five, ten minutes. Two ships went by, one on either side and less than a hundred yards away. We heard their engines and the hiss of water and even the sound of voices on their decks. It was eerie to have them go coasting by and not be able to see them.

We heard the destroyer next, heard the rush of her engines approaching until they stopped, and a voice spoke almost alongside.

"What's the matter, *Starling*?"

Shoes scraped the iron deck plates behind us and I knew that some of the crew were on deck, listening in.

"Our engines have broken down." That was our skipper's voice.

There was a pause, then the destroyer spoke in a strained, tired voice. "How long will it take to repair?"

"Twenty-four hours—maybe eighteen; if we had some help." The skipper had a deep guttural voice. It was one of the reasons we hated his guts.

"There's no help." The destroyer spoke impatiently. "You'll just have to drop out, make repairs, then put back for Bermuda." The voice hesitated a second time, then added, "Good luck."

"Amen," Joe said savagely and I repeated it softly under my breath. We'd be needing luck. The middle of the Atlantic was no place for a little six-thousand-ton freighter without engines and only one 4-inch gun on her forward deck for protection. Some thirty-odd members of the crew must have been thinking the same thing as they listened to the destroyer rush away into the darkness. We'd been told the Germans had five hundred submarines in the Atlantic. We didn't doubt it. Within the past forty-eight hours the convoy had been attacked almost continually. The sea had been full of them and their deadly spawn.

"That louse had something to do with this," Joe Mayer spoke fiercely. "Crankshaft couplings don't break, not McNair's." I could tell Joe was staring up at the bridge with his fists clenched at his sides. "He's a dirty Nazi—"

"Shut up," I stopped him sharply. "You don't know anything."

He did shut up, partly because he was tired of arguing with me and partly because Joe's the kind that talks loud when he's sure no one's around and now he couldn't tell who might be standing nearby in the darkness, listening. He'd worked himself into a first-class case of the jitters lately.

I DON'T know when it all started, just after we left Philly two weeks before, I guess. I don't even know how it started. Olaf, our none-too-bright Swede had voiced it the second night out, over chow. He'd said, innocently enough, "Funny the skipper losing three ships in a row."

The effect had been instantaneous. Every man in that foc'sle had stopped eating, their spoons and knives halfway to their mouths.

"What's so funny about it?" I'd asked quickly. "Plenty of other skippers have lost more than one ship in this war."

Joe had answered sneeringly, "Yeah, but each one of his ships had dropped out of the convoy for repairs."

What good were arguments after that? Everything about our skipper was just wrong. Even Olaf soon caught on.

And now for two hours we stood by the rail and listened to the convoy go by on both sides of us. I started to count the ships but gave up finally. Twice we were nearly rammed. It was a big convoy.

Then the sound of their engines came from only one direction—dead ahead—and grew steadily fainter until they died away and when they were gone we knew we were alone. I think most of us at that moment felt pretty lonely and as though we had been tossed to the lions. We were safe as long as it remained dark. But with the daylight—

"Let's go below," Joe Mayer said.

There was a terrible stillness all about us, the kind of stillness that makes a sailor uneasy and on edge. The ship lifted to the long swells; and drifted aimlessly. A faint breeze was stirring. It felt chill against my face.

We passed an engine-room ventilator and the sound of hammering floated up to us, then an angry Scottish voice emitting a continuous stream of oaths. These were pleasant sounds. It was comforting at least to know that McNair and his gang were already at work on the repairs. McNair was a good man. We all had confidence in him.

A dozen of the crew followed us down the ladder into the foc'sle, their feet clumping noisily on the iron rungs. No one spoke and we carefully avoided each other's eyes as we stretched out in our bunks. It was hot down there, hot and smelly with sweat. A thirty-watt bulb glowed dimly on the bulkhead.

Joe Mayer sat on the edge of his bunk. I knew he would be the first to speak.

He said suddenly, growling out the words, "Wish to hell I could swim."

The men were wide awake in their bunks, their faces turned in his direction. He got up and paced the deck nervously between the lavatory and the lockers. He was a kid still, ten years younger than my thirty-one. He was new to the sea where I'd been weaned on a bucket of salt water.

Joe dropped onto his bunk again and clenched his hands between his knees. "Carl Krueger! Even the name's German."

"How about yours?" I reminded him quietly. I'm a cautious man and like to keep trouble from brewing.

Joe looked startled. "I was born in Indiana."

"How do you know the skipper wasn't born in Indiana too?"

"Look at the way he talks. Look at what he eats and drinks, sauerkraut and beer!"

He had plenty of arguments.

"What do you think you're going to do about it?" I asked him point-blank.

He was silent for almost a minute, and a white circle grew around his mouth. Then he said, his gaze on his feet, "Make damn sure my life preserver works," and I slowly relaxed.

There wasn't much sleep for any of us that night. McNair's gang kept up a continuous hammering that resounded through the steel bulkheads and sides of the ship. And I think some of the men who'd been listening to Joe lately figured it might be their last night. They lay in their bunks talking in subdued tones and one youngster even wrote a letter, though it was hard to understand where he expected to mail it if ever we were torpedoed.

The watch was changed at four, then at eight I had to go back on deck. I stood in the bow with Joe and looked out over an ocean that was flat and glassy calm. The sun was up and it was hot. A few feet away the Navy gun-crew, four of them, were polishing their gun as they'd been doing almost continually on the trip over. You could tell they were eager but you could tell they were nervous too, the same as we all were nervous. The *Starling* was drifting helplessly. If a torpedo were sighted there wasn't a thing we could do to get out of its way. Then I thought of McNair's gang down in the engine-room and didn't feel quite so bad off.

Joe nudged me with his elbow and I swung around and saw our skipper on the bridge. He was pacing slowly up and down with his hands behind his back and his gaze turned toward the sea. He was a heavy-set man in his fifties; a stern-looking guy with iron-gray hair and the coldest pair of eyes I'd ever had look through me.

"Kraut-head," Joe said savagely.

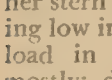
Carl Krueger—I tried again to think back and recall if I had ever heard of a skipper by that name; it remained unfamiliar, strange, unfriendly. Mr. Andrews, the mate, came out of the wheel-house and stopped to talk to the skipper. They stood leaning their elbows on the rail, looking down at us and I turned my eyes back to the sea, constantly on the alert for what might be out there.

We came off watch at noon but I didn't go below. The rest of the crew were on deck and we ate our chow there, sitting on the winches and hatch covers. We figured we'd have a better chance in the open. There wasn't much talk. The Navy boys were standing by their gun; the

skipper still paced his bridge; while from the engine-room came the steady pounding that McNair had kept up now for twelve hours. We listened to it in silence, impatient for it to end and our engines to start up again.

Joe said, "A sub can hear that racket ten miles away."

A slight breeze came up a little later and it wasn't so hot. The *Starling* turned slowly, the drag of the propeller keeping her stern toward the breeze. She was riding low in the water because of the heavy load in her holds. It was explosives mostly; dynamite, TNT, bombs—everything it takes to keep an army in Africa supplied. It was the sort of cargo to make a sailor's hair turn gray.



WHEN THE U-boat did appear I don't think anyone was greatly surprised. The warning came from the crow's nest and was followed by a mad scramble to the port rail and there she was, her conning-tower breaking surface less than five hundred yards away. Our first anxious glances spanned the gap between the *Starling* and the sub, looking for the line of bubbles that would mean torpedo. But the glassiness of the sea remained unruffled and our glances settled quickly on the U-boat.

We stood at the rail and watched her bow thrust aggressively into sight and her long gray hull break surface, streaming white water down over her sides. As though from miles away we heard our skipper's voice shouting orders but I don't think any of us moved. Our feet were literally frozen to the deck. I know I was pretty scared.

Then the gun over our heads went off and a cloud of powder-smoke streamed down into the well-deck, burning our eyes and choking in our throats. When it cleared a little we saw the spurt of water beyond and to port of the sub. Two more shots our Navy crew got away and they were wide. The fourth was closer.

But now men appeared in the sub's conning-tower and more bobbed up from a hatch forward and ran aft along the slippery deck to jerk the tompion from the gun just forward of the conning-tower.

The German's first shot screamed over our heads an instant later and instinctively we ducked, Joe Mayer ducking the lowest of us all. We saw the puff of smoke on the second shot, then the sound of it was lost in a blinding explosion over our heads just aft of the bridge. The *Starling* shivered as though she had struck a reef, and pieces of debris started falling all around us. A piece of wood, part of a door-frame grazed my shoulder. A steel plate, a hundred pound chunk, crashed down on the hatch cover where we'd been sitting a moment before.

Now we snapped back to life at the sound of the captain's voice shouting orders. We saw him on the bridge which had miraculously escaped, a megaphone at his lips. Behind him smoke was rising into the air. It rose in a thin white column and suddenly it dawned on us that we were afire.

Twenty of us hit the bridge ladders at the same time—our first thoughts for the explosives in the holds. Some of us had seen shiploads of it blow before.

We hit the bridge and the skipper waved us aft and all at once we saw what the Germans had been after. Our radio shack was blown to bits. The port bulkhead was gone and the roof sagged in. Smoke was pouring out and inside we saw flame.

Mr. Andrews was there, blood streaming from his nose and ears. Under his orders men broke out hoses and some came with axes. Big Olaf and I kept on going. We saw young Jim Vining lying in the corner and had to crawl over burning timbers and red hot girders to reach him. It was hot as Hades inside.

We picked Jim up and carried him outside and a hose was turned on us to cool us off. I thought big Olaf would cough his lungs up the next few minutes. I'd held my breath; but I'd lost my eyebrows and all the hair on my arms, and parts of me felt as though they'd just been roasted.

We laid Jim Vining on the deck a safe distance away from his radio shack. He was still alive and moaning feebly. Captain Krueger pushed through the ring of sailors and knelt beside him. He bent his head close to Jim's lips. The boy's eyes had opened.

He was trying to speak. It was heartbreaking to stand there and watch him try so desperately. But he made it. He said, "I couldn't get a message away, sir. I tried, but—"

And then his head rolled to one side and his mouth dropped open. I looked down at Krueger's broad back and short-cropped head and unconsciously clenched my fists. When he stood up there was no expression in his eyes. I could see their coldness and I wondered then if he knew or could sense what we were thinking about him. The rest of the crew were watching him but he didn't appear to notice them. There were queer lines about his mouth. Was it satisfaction—because Jim hadn't gotten a message away?

He turned back to the bridge and I glanced out at the submarine that was riding the swells easily about five hundred yards away. Only now its gun was silent and its crew was standing about the deck motionless. I could see several figures in the conning-tower. I thought, "Why aren't they shooting?"

And that was when I became aware of the second tragedy on board the *Starling*. I saw our gun lying on its side, a piece of twisted metal. Beside it lay several of the Navy boys. Two more were just picking themselves up off the deck. Some of our crew were running toward them. Smoke hung over the bow of the ship.

There was only time for a quick glance. Under Mr. Andrew's direction we put the fire out in the radio shack and so prolonged the *Starling's* life a few minutes anyway. It had all happened in a few flaming seconds. We were stunned, shocked as much by the accuracy of the German gunners as by the damage their shells had done. They were veterans at this sort of thing. And the sea was smooth as glass.

We carried Jim Vining into the chart room and laid him on the transom. Then some of the crew went forward to help with the Navy boys. The skipper and Mr. Andrews were on the bridge. Mr. Andrews was dabbing at his nose with a handkerchief. His face was white with shock.

And then we heard the sub's diesels and she began moving toward us slowly. She drew closer and the men on her deck became distinct now. Several officers were standing in the conning-tower.

Captain Krueger watched them through his glasses.

THE SUB came within two hundred yards of the *Starling* and stopped and drifted broadside to us.

And then came the hail. "Have you a doctor on board?"

I saw Mr. Andrews start and glance at the skipper. Captain Krueger never took his glasses from his eyes. I saw Joe Mayer on the deck below me and wondered where he'd been all during the excitement. I could hear big Olaf coughing somewhere. He'd really gotten a lungful of smoke.

"Have you a doctor on board?" The hail came for the second time, a little impatient now. It was in a deep gutteral voice, and it struck me how closely it resembled the skipper's.

For a moment longer the skipper kept his glasses to his eyes, then he lowered them and picked up his megaphone and put it to his lips. "Yes," he shouted back. "We have."

I was surprised. Dumfounded would be more nearly accurate. We had no doctor.

"Lower a boat and send him over," came the prompt reply. "*Schnell! Verstehen Sie?* Do you understand?"

Captain Krueger turned and walked into the wheel-house. The mate followed quickly and the door closed behind them. Two other seamen and myself were left on deck. We looked at each other without speaking. What could we say? Could we voice the sudden suspicion that sprang into our heads, into my head anyway. Not yet. Caution kept us from letting our imaginations run riot; and with me there was the additional restraint of not wanting to be like Joe Mayer.

The minutes dragged and I wondered what was going on in the wheel-house between the skipper and the mate. I kept one eye on the sub and their five-inch gun which was pointing directly at us. Forward, some of our crew were hosing the deck around the twisted gun. It wasn't possible to forget, even for a second, the tons of explosives in our holds.

Then the door of the wheel-house opened and the mate backed out slowly. His face was pale and he was greatly agitated, as we could plainly see. He beckoned to me and I followed him down the ladder to Number Two boat. Quickly he called Number Two's crew together and we ripped off the tarpaulin and swung the davits out ready for lowering. Joe Mayer was standing by the rail, watching, and suddenly I didn't like the look in his eyes. More of the crew were standing around. Still others came up. We could see the sub off our quarter. It was silent.

Then a guttural voice bellowed through a megaphone at us. We caught the words, "Doctor," and *"Schnell,"* and "Hurry." We stood in the well-deck and the sun beating down on us was hot. No one answered. Again the U-boat hailed us, impatient now, angry.

And that was when our skipper appeared at the head of the bridge ladder. He glanced out at the submarine, then looked down at us. We stared back up at him, every last man of us, and right then our suspicions were fully confirmed. He'd changed his brass buttons for a plain sea jacket. He was bareheaded, smoking a cigarette calmly. And in his right hand he carried a small black bag.

We all knew that bag. It was a plain overnight bag, the same one he had brought on board with him in Philadelphia. All eyes were on it now; and every man of us knew then, had they had any doubts before, that our skipper was leaving us for good.

All eyes watched him when he started down the ladder. Captain Carl Krueger would soon be safely on board the submarine with his friends; we would be left to be blown out of the water—that was what we were thinking. It was stamped all over the faces of the men. It was in their eyes, sharp, accusing.

Then my glance fell on Joe Mayer and I knew we were in for trouble. He had a hose wrench in his left hand. His features were drawn from two weeks of strain and his lips twitched now with the stress of the moment. I could have stopped him, but didn't. My legs and arms refused to move, and there wasn't the will to make them. The captain descended the ladder, started toward the boat. He was carrying his bag in his left hand.

He was taking the cigarette from his mouth to flick it over the side when Joe jumped him. Joe sprang at him, his hose wrench rising. There was a frantic look in Joe's eyes. I'd seen the same look once before, in the eyes of a drowning man.

Krueger stopped and his free arm rose. With an agility that surprised us all he caught Joe's wrist, jerked Joe toward him, then flung him back bodily. Joe staggered against the rail. He was still clutching the hose wrench.

It was the mate who stopped the fight. He sprang forward before Joe could throw the wrench. He hit Joe on the side of the jaw, hit him with all the strength and power of his right arm. "You fool, you want to get us blown out of the water?" he said hoarsely.

It all happened in a few seconds. The rest of us hadn't moved. But now a dozen heads turned nervously toward the U-boat. I kept my eyes on Joe Mayer. Joe was conscious. He lay on his back on the deck, looking up at the mate. The hose wrench was still clutched in his fingers, but he didn't show any signs of wanting to use it now. His face was gray.

The mate turned and barked some orders and the boat's crew sprang forward. The skipper's face was the same color as Joe's. He stepped around Joe and into the lifeboat, his mouth grim, his eyes like stones.

"Lower away."

They were his only words. They were the last words we ever heard him utter. He took his seat at the tiller and we began lowering. He was sitting stiffly, his head half-turned to the submarine. I couldn't help but wonder what was going on in his mind, what he was feeling. Anger at Joe Mayer, of course; but more than that. Eagerness to be going back to his own people, I imagined. Satisfaction, triumph over a job well done—a series of jobs when you remembered those other ships he'd lost.

Halfway down the side he heard the pound of hammers coming from an open porthole and suddenly for the first time

since we had sighted the submarine I remembered McNair and his gang. It sent a cold shiver down my back to think of them down there when all the shooting had been going on.

We touched the water and cast off the hoisting tackles. We unshipped our oars and started rowing. For several minutes I didn't take my eyes off the little black bag at his feet. When I did look up a hundred yards of open water lay between us and the rusted side of the *Starling*.

WE APPROACHED the U-boat slowly and over our shoulders we counted a dozen men on her deck. We noticed her sides were covered with barnacles and green slime, and her sailors looked pale and thin; all signs that she had been at sea a long time.

One of those sailors caught our bow with a hook when we came up to the sub on the starboard side. Three uniformed men looked down at us from the bridge and we gave them back stare for stare. I think we all wanted to show them that we weren't afraid of them, even though we were.

Captain Krueger rose and stepped up onto the wet deck of the U-boat. Just a second he stood with his back to us; then at a sharp word from the bridge he walked toward the open hatch at the base of the conning-tower. He looked enormous in his sea-jacket. His bullet-head, nearly shaven, was like some of the sub's crew.

We didn't wait around after that. The sailor turned our bow loose and we started pulling back for the *Starling*. With our tongues in our cheeks at first. Then with fresh hope when we saw that the Germans didn't mean to stop us.

We should have known better. We should have known that the Germans never did anything without a reason. In our case they must have felt it was more fun to shoot a man when he was moving than when he was standing still. Either way we didn't have a chance.

I was at the tiller. I saw Captain Krueger standing at the foot of the conning-tower, talking up to the three officers on the bridge. Then he started down the hatch. His head and shoulders sank from sight; and it was as though this was the signal.

The sub opened fire on the *Starling*. We heard the roar of the shot, and a whistle over our heads, then the explosion as the shell struck. We stopped rowing. We were less than two hundred yards from the *Starling* by then. We could hear the mate bawling orders, see some of our men running toward a thick cloud of smoke rising amidships. Others were

(Continued on page 126)

" 'B-O-A-R-D for Aurora"

ONE hundred years ago this month, citizens of Aurora, Ill. chartered a 12-mile railroad to give the little town on the Fox River a rail link with Chicago. Out of that venture grew today's great Burlington Route, transportation giant of the mid-west, whose 11,000 miles of track reach into 14 states, serving cities as far apart as Billings, Mont., and Dallas, Tex.; Minneapolis and St. Louis; Chicago & Denver. For a dramatic 32-page photo story covering the highlights of the road's history and including the most outstanding pictures ever made along the WAY OF THE ZEPHYRS, don't miss the big March issue of RAILROAD, now on your newsstand or send 35c to—

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GUNS FOR THE

"Steady," Fairweather cautioned the dragoon captain, "or I'll splatter your brains on the snow."

JOHN FAIRWEATHER closed the door of the *Royal George* against the tail of the wind which was curling up from Newcastle's wharves. With a show of self-assurance he was far from feeling, he slapped at the snow covering the capes of his greatcoat and looked around the inn's public rooms. It was, he noticed uneasily, uncommon empty. Perhaps this was not so strange considering the coldness of the night, but it was disturbing that the sole customer should be a besotted Hessian corporal—a dragoon by his uniform and facings.

His entrance did not go unnoticed. The corporal had looked up from his tankard: "Und vy be you aboudt dis kind of a night?"

GENERAL

By EDWIN SIMMONS

ILLUSTRATED BY EVERETT RAYMOND KINSTLER

"If thee must know," said Fairweather stamping the snow from his boots, "it's my dinner."

"*Ach,* so—a Quaker by your talk," said the corporal with heavy satisfaction. "Sidt mit me, Quaker. The tally maybe I ledt you pay. *Was sagen sie?*"

There was nothing Fairweather could say. He crossed the plank floor and took a second place at the heavy oak table. He was a tall young man, somewhat worn just now from the rigors of winter campaigning. His coat and small clothes were gray broadcloth and plainly cut. A captain in Harry Lee's Light Horse, it suited him better for the present not to clothe his lean frame in uniform.

The corporal beamed at his unwilling guest and, banging on the table with the flat of his hand, shouted for ale. Fairweather inwardly groaned. Dinner with a Hessian dragoon, be he drunk or sober, was no part of a plan already extremely uncertain. One wrong move and he

would be fair on his way to stretching a length of British hemp.

The half-door from the kitchen swung open and a serving girl came through with a filled stone mug in each hand. She was rather more handsome, Fairweather was quick to see, than the average tavern wench. Under the specks of kitchen soot her skin was clear as milk and the firelight caught reddish glints in her hair.

She bent a well-filled bodice across the table and set the ale in front of them. She straightened, her green eyes catching Fairweather's for a second. She gave him an odd, measuring glance and then turned with a flounce of her woolen skirt which would have done a queen's satins credit. Fairweather watched her neat ankles as her thick-soled shoes beat a rapid tattoo across the broad planks to the kitchen. Now if a man had a bit of time to spare—

"Nodt such thoughts, Quaker," the corporal wagged a stubby finger under Fairweather's nose. "Dot *Fraulein ist der Hauptmann's.*"

THE TROOPER solemnly buried his blunt-tipped nose in his mug of dark brown ale. Fairweather, himself, took a long pull at the heavy, creamy stuff. He was to lay a pinetree shilling—seldom seen these days of paper money—on the table and the American agent was to recognize him by this sign. How was he to expose a pinetree shilling in front of this drunken clown?

The corporal, having drained his mug, banged it on the scarred oak table. He sighed at the dull and empty sound.

"It iss an unhappy war," he philosophized.

"Not so bad with a pint and a warm fire," answered Fairweather.

The corporal shook his head sadly.

"To ride to Philadelphia in dis snow und cold iss *nicht gut.*"

"You ride to Philadelphia tonight?" prodded Fairweather.

"*Ja,*" said the corporal. "An escort the troop iss."

Escort? The word caught Fairweather's attention. The Delaware was frozen. Newcastle was the last open water. Ships could discharge here. A troop of dragoons dispatched as escort could only mean a supply train to be convoyed.

The corporal's slightly befogged eyes had suddenly become flinty.

"I should not have spoken, Quaker. It gives your face a look I don't like so good."

The corporal's crossbelts were hung for comfort's sake over the back of his chair. With one hand he caught at Fairweather's wrist and with the other he fumbled behind him for his pistol.

"I think we have a talk midt *der Hauptmann,*" he said.

Fairweather was in no mood for further conversation. With his free hand he smashed his stone tankard against the side of the corporal's head. The dragoon sagged forward on the table. His crossbelts clattered to the floor.

The door to the inn banged open. A dragoon captain, a foppish fellow, stamped in followed by a tall and grizzled sergeant. Fairweather stood with the stone mug still in his hand. The Hessian officer's glance flicked suspiciously over him and then riveted on the slumped form of the dragoon corporal.

"Wake that sodden swine," the captain ordered the sergeant in German. The sergeant advanced to the table, seized the corporal by the shoulder and shook him. The corporal's head lolled back. Under the greasy mess of pomatum and powder clotting his hair the angry red weal caused by Fairweather's blow clearly showed.

The sergeant, swearing like the trooper he was, lunged at Fairweather. Fairweather upset the heavy oak table on him and turned to meet the captain who had pulled his saber free of its scabbard. Fairweather threw the tankard he still held. More by luck than intention it cracked against the Hessian's wrist. The saber spun across the floor and Fairweather made for the door.

He collided with the serving girl. She was just entering, her shawl wet from the snow. He dodged past her. Unhitching his black gelding, he flung himself into the saddle and was pounding down the snow-covered cobbles before he dared a backward glance.

He turned to see the dragoon captain

and sergeant slide from their horses' backs into the slush which filled the gutter. But this was no time to be puzzling why two Hessian troopers could not stay in their saddles.

Dragoons were being turned out of their billets on the double. Guttural commands were shouted. Carbines banged once or twice; their balls clipping close to Fairweather's head. Luckily, the line of Hessian pickets was stretched thin. Fairweather found a promising northbound road and galloped along it. At the limits of the town a sentry, standing in the glare of his watch fire, shouted a challenge. Before he could do more than cock his piece, Fairweather put spurs to his horse and rode him down.

A minute's more hard riding and he felt safe in reining his black down to a walk. With time to think he found himself piecing together the sorry report he would have to make. He had been given a confidential mission and had succeeded in making a fool of himself in a drunken tavern brawl. Nothing more. What was the information the General held to be so vital? And what could he offer in substitution?

True, he had learned that the British were moving supplies this night from Newcastle to Philadelphia. Winter stores, no doubt—blankets and greatcoats and double-soled boots. But little good this knowledge was. By the time he reached the American camp or even its outposts, the British train would be safely under the wing of Sir William Howe's Philadelphia garrison.

Yet, if he could somehow deliver that convoy to the Continental camp . . .

He groped for a plan. Brandywine had been fought near here. There were patriots in this neighborhood. The puzzle was to find them.

He walked his horse along the road until he found a farmhouse to his liking. He chose a good medium-sized house of Pennsylvania stone with a carefully-kept barn. The windows of the house were bright from the light of the fire within. It reflected red against the snow.

Fairweather came from a farm like this, only farther south. He dismounted, hitched his horse to the gate, and walked up the path to the farmhouse door. It was a heavy, double-timbered affair. He banged on it with his fist. No answer, but inside he could hear a chair scrape across the floor. He banged again. The door opened a crack.

"Who is it?" asked a voice.

"Friend," answered Fairweather. "I've lost the road. Perhaps you can direct me —and give me a chance to warm."

"How many?" asked the voice.

"Just myself," answered Fairweather.

THE door was grudgingly opened. Fairweather stepped in and blinked against the light. A heavy-set man with a broad, square-cut face stood to the side of the doorway, holding a musket hip high. He swung the door shut and slid the bolt home.

"Over by the fire if you want to warm," he said suspiciously. By the broad open hearth sat a woman with a worried, workworn face. Her stern, uncompromising eyes were on Fairweather. So were the eyes of a boy who sat on the settle which stood at right angles to the fireplace. A young, pinch-faced boy, not more than seventeen, with his feet wrapped in flannel. He was holding a bowl of something and his hands were swollen and bluish.

The farmer interrupted Fairweather's hasty inspection of the room:

"Stranger here, I guess?" he asked.

"Yes, sir—travelling from Newcastle to Chester when I lost my way."

"Poor times to be travelling," said the farmer dubiously. "Particularly at night. Folks don't take kindly to strangers these times. You can warm by the fire a bit, but then I'll set you on the road and you'll have to be gone."

Fairweather backed to the fireplace and spread the skirts of his coat. A wet, woolen smell came out of his thawing clothes. "Much trouble through here?" he asked in as casual a voice as he could muster.

"What kind of trouble, mister?" The farmer's voice was hard-edged.

"The rebellion."

"We're just hard-working folks." It was the woman who spoke up quickly. "We ain't got no time for politickin'. Peter, drink your milk and don't pay no mind to this talk."

Fairweather studied the boy's hands and bandaged feet. He had to determine these people's party and do it quickly. Yet one wrong word might get him a musket ball.

"I think I know what's ailing your boy," he said slowly. "I've seen hundreds like him. Just as young and just as bad off. Frostbite. It comes from marching in broken boots. Sleeping without blankets in huts that don't keep out the weather. And not having enough food to keep your blood from thinning."

"Hundreds of boys like him, you say?" asked the woman, a bit of the sternness going out of her face.

"Hundreds. Maybe thousands."

"I ain't a deserter," the boy blurted. "Not really. I just had to come home for a spell. The captain said it was all right. I'll be back come spring."

"Sure you will, son," said Fairweather. Some of the tension eased out of the room. The farmer awkwardly extended a broad and calloused hand.

"I guess maybe I had ye wrong, mister. The name's Mickle and this is my boy Peter and my wife Sara."

Fairweather gripped the farmer's hand.

"It's time for honest names—I'm John Fairweather, captain with Lee's Legion."

"Golly," said the boy. "I'd give a parcel to ride with Light Horse Harry Lee."

"Hundreds like my boy starving and freezing to death," said the woman sadly. The farmer stood the musket by the fireplace and laid a clumsy hand on her shoulder.

"'Sall right, Sara. Ain't nothing we can do about it."

"But there is," said Fairweather.

"What's that?" Mickle said sharply, suspicion again edging his voice. "I don't have but a handful of grain and hardly a head of stock left. The British stripped me clean."

"I'm not foraging," said Fairweather. "I'm thinking of a British supply train that's marching from Newcastle to Philadelphia this night. Twenty men could take that train—if I could get the men."

Mickle thought this over for a solid minute, then slapped his fist into his open palm.

"I'll trust ye, lad. I like the way ye face up to a man and ye've got an honest chin. I'll get ye your twenty men if they can be gotten. Sara, fetch me my coat and hat."

He bundled himself up, then paused with his hand on the bolt of the door.

"Cap'n—" he hesitated. "Cap'n, I think it best if ye wait in the barn. And Sara, ye'd better send the boy t'bed and go yerself. And close the shutters so that no prying Tory will see we're about this time of the night. Now Cap'n, if ye'll follow me."

THEY WENT together out into the farm yard. Mickle unhitched Fairweather's horse from the gate and led him around to the barn in back. He put the gelding in a box stall and dumped a measure of oats into the manger.

"There—that'll hold ye, fellow. Now we'll see about the mare."

He dropped a folded blanket and saddle over the back of a racky-looking gray mare and tightened the cinch.

"I'll leave the lantern with ye," he said, leading the mare to the barn door, "But shield it so the gleam don't carry to the outside."

Mickle clopped off into the darkness, the noise of the mare's hooves muffled by the snow. Fairweather swung the barn door shut after him. Somewhere in the barn beyond the reach of his lantern's feeble beam he could hear a cow, her sleep interrupted, moodily shuffling about.

He went over to the box stall which housed his black gelding, felt under the skirts of the saddle, and removed a pair of pistols he had secreted there. He held them close to the lantern, examined their primings carefully. The ride had not dampened them. He thrust his pistols into the outside pockets of his coat so that the butts were resting within easy reach.

Then he took a handful of hay and brushed down his horse. This done, he set about methodically pacing the width of the barn to fight off the chill that kept creeping on him. He could do less with the depressing thoughts which seemed wont to gather. How could he hope, with

a handful of Pennsylvania farmers, to capture a British wagon train? How did he know that even now Mickle wasn't betraying him?

And then he found himself thinking of the girl at the inn. A pretty thing. Was she really the Hessian captain's? An unpleasant possibility struck him. Had she betrayed him to her lover? Was she the reason for the sudden arrival of the captain and sergeant? It must have been so. She had left the tavern. Her shawl had been wet with snow when he brushed past her.

Perhaps half an hour passed and then the creak of the barn door caused him to spin around, hands dropping to his pistol butts.

An ancient individual, battered felt hat tied on bonnet-wise with a muffler, entered the barn.

"Don't shoot, laddie," the oldster croaked. "If I meant ye harm, I'd a dropped ye through the winder with Old Betsey here."

He was sheltering the lock of a long-barreled rifle with the flap of his coat. He fumbled in the dingy recesses of his clothing and produced the blackened stub of a clay pipe. He punched it full of tobacco with a gnarled thumb and lit it at the lantern.

"No use gittin' anxious, son. It'll be midnight afore the most of 'em are here." He clamped his near-toothless gums onto the pipestem. "That is," he continued, "if any more has a mind to leave a warm bed to go adventurin' in the snow."

A bead of moisture formed at the end of the old man's nose, trembled, and dropped onto the knotted end of his muffler.

Time passed while the oldster placidly puffed at his pipe. The others were agonizingly slow in coming. When they did arrive, it was in ones and twos. They were gruffly introduced by the ancient and then arranged themselves suspiciously on the far side of the barn. They were men well past their best years. The stamp of hard toil was on them. They had brought their weapons. Smoothbores and shotguns for the most part, but an occasional long rifle here and there. Others had picks and axes and pry bars.

At midnight or thereabouts, Mickle led his gray mare back into the barn and nodded to Fairweather.

"That's the lot of them. All that I could rouse."

Fairweather made a quick count of noses. There were eighteen including Mickle and himself. A scant handful but it would have to do.

"Well," prodded Mickle, "tell 'em what ye got in mind."

Fairweather sucked in a deep breath and looked around at the assembled faces. Except for a half-grown boy or two, every one of these men was old enough to be his father. He spoke with all the conviction he could muster. When he was done, he paused and looked around. No appreciable encouragement showed in the lantern-lit faces. He plunged on: "The Philadelphia pike passes close to here. There must be a place on it suitable for an ambush."

The farmers shuffled their feet, made noncommittal mutterings.

"Sure there is," piped the ancient who had been the first to arrive. "I know it and so do ye all. Down by the ford where the road narrers an' goes through the woods. I got three grandsons in the winter camp an' if I can help 'em, I'm fer doin' it."

"Cyrus is right," said Mickle. "The ford's the place. How many are with us?"

There was an awkward minute of waiting.

"I'll go," boomed out a burly farmer.

That broke the spell. One by one the men spoke or nodded their approval.

"The night's growing short," said Fairweather, anxious to be started before minds could be changed. "Let's be moving."

IT WAS hard walking through the drifting snow and Fairweather was sore put to keep up with the pace set by the countrymen. The snow worked into the tops of his boots and turned his feet into soggy lumps. He was plagued with doubts. What if there was no wagon train? He was depending on a drunken Hessian's statement. Worse, what if it were a column of newly-arrived troops the dragoons were escorting? It was just

as logical to assume that troops were being landed at Newcastle as it was supplies. And the business of the girl stuck with him like a puzzling ache.

They marched an hour or a little less—a good four miles, he estimated—before they reached the place the old man had named. Once at the ford, Fairweather had no complaint to find with the ancient's choice. There was a boggy stretch of road, well-frozen now, walled on each side by woods and underbrush.

The pike was corduroy. The farmers set about loosening enough logs for a barricade. It was hard work. The weather had cemented the logs into the mud. The barrier was just beginning to take shape when the pickets reported hooves and wagon wheels coming from the south. The farmers scurried to cover.

A pair of troopers—the escort's advance riders—rode past Fairweather, so close he could have reached out and touched their horses' legs. They were almost on the barrier before they could see it in the gloom. They cursed, wheeled, and would have galloped back if they had not been toppled from their saddles by buckshot blasts.

Their warning would have been but poor help to the wagon train. Fairweather's ambushers were strung along both sides of the road, a hundred yards before the barricade. By the time the first shots rang out, the train was well into the trap.

"Fire," he yelled, and a satisfying volley of musket balls and heavy shot laced the night with flame.

The road was too narrow for the teams to be turned. The well-ordered train was reduced in seconds to a confusion of frightened horses and tangled harness. The teamsters ingloriously found what cover they could beneath their wagons.

The dragoons were made of better stuff. Fairweather guessed them to be about forty in number, in double column, half to the front, half to the rear of the wagons proper. Now in the dimness of the night he could see them dismounting and re-forming. That was because their officer had correctly decided mounted action was impossible. They fell back to the defense of the wagons in good order, unslinging their short cavalry muskets and returning the rebel fire.

Their seeming composure alarmed Fairweather. If he had his troop of Continentals behind him he might risk a stand-up battle with these Hessian mercenaries, but it was too much to expect of his farmer irregulars. Stout fellows they were, but he knew what a few well-regulated volleys could do to militia. Already he could hear a crashing through the frozen underbrush that told him that at least some of his partisans were slipping away through the darkness.

He had to bring the action to a close before his whole ambush frittered away. He thought of a charge. Then remembering the dragoons' sabers he reconsidered. He could not expect his farmers to meet that slashing steel.

In the musket flashes lancing the dull night, Fairweather caught a glimpse of a silver gorget on a uniformed breast. That would be the officer commanding the escort. He leveled a pistol, then changed his mind.

If he could catch that fellow instead of shooting him—well, it was worth trying. He worked along the road's edge until he was abreast of where he had caught the gleam of the officer's insignia.

He leaped out onto the road, seized his quarry by the sword belt, spun him around. It was the captain from the inn. Holding a pistol against his prize's head,

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he backed against the protection of a canvas-covered wagon load.

"Now," he said, looking at his catch, "tell your men to cease firing."

The captain cursed and fumbled for his sidearms, but Fairweather held him close. "Steady," he cautioned, "or I'll splatter your brains on the snow." The tall dragoon sergeant, who alone in the confusion saw what was happening, started to lunge with his saber, then dropped the point.

"Best do what he asks, *Herr Hauptmann*," he said unhappily.

The captain remained mute.

"Three seconds," warned Fairweather. "I've a hundred men in the bush."

The starch went out of the young captain's backbone.

"Very well," he said, his voice thick with humiliation. "Sergeant," he went on in German, "tell the men to desist."

SOMEONE had set a wagon ablaze. In its glare Fairweather had the sergeant form up the Hessians. Their arms were stacked; their sabers grounded. Only then did Fairweather order his irregulars from the bush. The Hessian captain's jaw worked angrily when he saw the slimness of the American force. The dragoons' faces were sullen and dismayed in the firelight.

From the flank came a high-pitched cackle and Cyrus, the old man from the barn, shouldered through to Fairweather dragging by the arm a boy in a dragoon's greatcoat. Only it wasn't a boy . . .

The firelight caught a tangled profusion of curls the color of a polished copper kettle. Something balled up inside Fairweather as he saw it was the girl from the inn . . .

The next morning was cold but crystal clear. Behind Fairweather stretched the wagon train. There had been only time for the roughest of counts, but there were a dozen carts which certainly contained five hundred stand of muskets with bayonets, near a ton of powder, as much bar lead and some cast bullets, a great many blankets, coats, and shoes, and a good deal of miscellaneous equipage. His farmer soldiers were all well-mounted on Hessian horses. Stumbling along in the snow were the thirty-odd remaining dragoons and their perfumed captain. It should have been a proud day for Fairweather, but there was something gnawing at his pleasure. That confounded girl. A Hessian officer's plaything. He found himself riding back to her wagon and reining in.

"Good morning," she said pleasantly enough.

"Morning, ma'am," he said stiffishly and coughed.

"Captain," she said. "Are you going to turn me over to General Washington when we reach Valley Forge?"

"I have no choice, ma'am," said Fairweather, wondering how one so innocent-appearing could be so wicked.

"What do you suppose I'll be charged with?" she asked.

Fairweather studied the horizon.

"I've had short experience with female prisoners of war, ma'am. That will be for the General to decide."

"I wonder if I should tell General Washington about the Quaker who came blundering into the *Royal George*," mused the girl. "Or of the serving girl who expected a pinetree shilling to be shown."

Fairweather felt heat rising from his collar out of all proportion to the coldness of the morning. The girl went on: "Or should I just tell the General how the Hessians' saddle girths were cut so the Quaker could escape the mess he made of things."

Fairweather put spurs to his horse and galloped straight ahead. Thunderation, what an idiot he had been. The girl was the agent he was to have met. Then with a sudden suspicion he whirled his horse and galloped back to the wagon.

"But," he said darkly, "if this is true, why was this Hessian captain fellow taking you to Philadelphia?"

The girl laughed.

"Our German captain was quicker at seeing the truth than our Quaker friend. I think if we had reached Philadelphia, General Howe would perforce have had me hanged."

Fairweather looked at the girl. His face was burning, but he was not too befuddled to see that there was tenderness as well as amusement in her laugh.

ILLUSTRATED BY V. E. PYLES

THE WRECK OF THE MERAHI

By

WILMON MENARD

Huge waves buffeted the schooner as Hayes bawled out orders to the native crew.

THERE occurred, during the time I was resident trader at Nukurua Atoll in the Tuamotu or Dangerous Isles in the far South Pacific, an act of cannibalism in which, surprisingly, natives were not involved. Three white men, adrift in a dinghy south of the Dangerous Islands, were the actors in the gruesome incident. It took place during the outbreak of hostilities in Europe and, because of the newspaper space taken up by the Nazi invasion of Poland, never appeared in print. But the facts, evidence and subsequent climax, stranger than fiction, were irrefutable: two white men had, in desperation and pangs of hunger, partly consumed the flesh of the third white man, who, it was suspected, had not died from exposure, shock or starvation, but had been deliberately murdered for that ghastly purpose. That I had met at one time in Papeete, Tahiti, the sole survivor of the schooner's sinking and knew of

his disreputable conduct in the islands gave me cause to doubt the story he told.

The trading-schooner *Merahi* had sunk during a tropical tempest far south of Pukaruha Atoll on a return trip from the Gambier Islands to Tahiti. Privately chartered by a group of Americans and Australians, of which the only survivor was the leader, it had been on a long cruise among the islands of French Oceania, and was heavily loaded with copra and pearl shell when it sailed full-tilt into a fierce squall. The schooner was low in the water from her over-limit cargo weight, and the first three mountainous waves swamped her. When one of her dinghies was sighted at sea, with floating debris and planks of her hull, she was given up for lost with all hands.

But about a month later the natives of Nengonengo Atoll sighted in the late afternoon a schooner's dinghy off her southern reefs, and viewed from afar she appeared empty. The villagers watched as the boat drew near the reef, close to where a break showed in the interminable line of surging waters. Caught in the strong inflow of the tide, the dinghy skimmed through the smooth channel. For a brief second it seemed about to upset. On either side seethed cauldrons of boiling, hissing white foam; but a miraculous quick lift of the dinghy by a lucky comber, a sudden propulsion, a smother of spray, and the thunder of the reef was behind. The dinghy floated on the calm surface of the lagoon, and on her counter was printed the name *Merahi*.

NATIVE pearl divers in their outrigger canoes approached the dinghy, each one plying his paddle to outstrip the other in a race for a salvage prize, but when they looked over the sides, they drew back in horror. Lying on the grating in the bottom of the boat was a headless corpse, the flesh completely sheared off its buttocks and hips, and one arm was missing, neatly severed at the shoulder. It was a revolting sight, bloated and blackened by the sun. Covered by a canvas in the stern was a cadaverous looking white man, with a broken arm, but still breathing. It was an obvious story—he had eaten the other to keep alive during the long month the dinghy had drifted across the empty sea under a blazing sun.

The telltale signs reminded the Paumotu Islanders of the time when their grandfathers ate the flesh of one another during warring expeditions or when famine, occasioned by ravages of hurricanes, sent them on the prowl for human "long-pig."

The survivor carried ashore from the *Merahi's* dinghy was George "Bucky" Hayes, a rather unsavory character of the islands. Sometime trader, now smuggler, again a card-cheat, mostly a drunken, quarrelsome beachcomber, he was the worst type of white man found in the islands of the far South Pacific. Hayes told rather conflicting stories of the schooner's sinking and subsequent events before a Board of Inquiry. He charged the first mate of the *Merahi*, Harold Liddell, with the murder and eating of Paul Stelling, an Australian, supercargo of the schooner. Conveniently this accused man had fallen overboard and drowned two days before the dinghy drifted into Nengonengo's lagoon.

But details of the act of cannibalism are worth including here as a preamble to a subsequent murder that came under my direct attention. This sequence is based on Hayes' account, with occasional annotations of my own as to the probable accuracy of events that took place just after the *Merahi's* sinking.

The storm had struck the schooner at midnight, while all were below deck asleep, save for the dozing Tahitian sailor at the wheel. Hayes, awakened by the tumult, had rushed on deck, just as a sudden veering of the gale occurred. He realized what was about to happen with this abrupt changing of the wind, and he rushed madly forward, bawling out in Tahitian to the native crew, "Drop mainsail and flying jibs!" To the native helmsman, straining at the spokes, he yelled, "Port! Hard-a-port!" But the orders were not obeyed promptly, and the sails, with a noise of cannon-fire, filled with a typhonic gale from another point, and the masts trembled as if they were willow wands under the renewed

attacks of wind and sea. Huge waves buffeted the schooner with sickening shocks. With a loud report a sail was ripped to shreds, followed a moment later by the splintering crash of a mast falling to deck. In the darkness the sailors with wild yells rushed forward with knives and axes to cut it free, but tragedy struck at them from the sea. A high comber crashed across the deck, and carried them overboard. Their drowning cries mingled with the fury of the tempest.

A second wave caught Hayes in the stern and knocked him up against the taffrail, breaking his arm. The deck was swept clean, as if the grim reaper with his scythe had shaved it from bow to stern. Deck-house, galley, lashed cargo, all were gone. On the port-side he saw the large dinghy, dangling from its lashings. Liddell and Stelling were trying to get it free. Another wave smashed over the schooner. It almost carried Hayes into the raging ocean. Half-stunned he gripped the railing and pulled himself to his feet. Liddell and Stelling were hollering for him to join them in the task of getting the dinghy over the side. Between them, during a short lull, they managed to cut the boat free. Stelling ran back to the wrecked galley and brought back a small portable Coleman-type burner and two buckets of foodstuffs and canned juices. But in transferring them from the schooner to the bobbing dinghy, the food spilled out of the buckets into the sea. But the burner was saved, as were the two buckets.

Hayes had a confused memory of that first stormy night. He was so battered and delirious that he lay in the bottom of the dinghy, not caring if it sank or not. The dinghy was tossed like a cork from wave to wave, now sliding with lightning speed down the smooth slopes, seemingly to the bottom of the ocean. Miraculously the dinghy righted herself each time and lurched on through the howling squall.

ONE DAY, Liddell aroused Hayes. He sat up and looked around. They were drifting in an empty sea under a leaden sky. Stelling had found three coconuts floating in the ocean, and had husked them with his sheath-knife, and they drank the water and ate the meat. The sky was still overcast, a strong wind blowing, and the waves dangerous. The odds were against them being rescued. They could not expect a schooner to pick them up soon, and as they had no oars, their only hope lay in drifting onto the reef of an atoll: and then it was a toss-up if they'd be killed on the sharp fangs of the coral.

Once, Stelling threw the husk of a coconut overboard. It coursed ahead of them as if propelled by an unseen hand. Their predicament dawned upon them with sickening clarity. They were caught in the merciless current that swept far to the south of the Dangerous Islands, taking them far away from the maze of atolls of the Tuamotus into a wilderness of sea where few schooners sailed.

Save for a half-dead noddy-tern that Hayes found floating in the sea, they depended solely on coconuts that had been swept from atolls by the storm and floated past them. There was some cord in the boat and Liddell made a hook from the nail of a seat-board, baiting it with a bit of coconut meat, and caught a small tuna. The salty flesh of the fish made their thirst excruciating. The coconuts had become scarcer. They had not been prudent enough to stow a supply of them in the boat when there had been plenty, now they were lucky to find two in a whole day.

Salt water blisters covered their bodies, and the sun seared their bodies to a raw state. The sea hadn't the fluidity of water; it was like a sheet of molten metal that appeared to steam and this whitish quivery haze, like a tremulous heat-fog, pressed in upon them. Sometimes on the horizon they would see the wind-torn fronds of coconut palms on the coral atolls. They would wave their shirts and shout like madmen, but it was to no avail. No doubt, they were uninhabited, as many of the atolls of the Dangerous Islands are. Sometimes in the night they would see atolls silhouetted against the moon. Once they came so close to an atoll they could see the lights of the village. They cried themselves hoarse and tried to paddle the boat with

their hands. Hayes made Stelling and Liddell jump into the water and try to propel the dinghy toward the atoll by kicking their feet while clinging to the stern and sides. But it was futile. The current was too strong. To them the southern ocean was like an insatiable monster. If they had not been so weakened by lack of food and exposure they might have tried to swim through shark-infested water to the atoll. Stelling and Liddell crawled into the boat and lay for many hours in the bottom in a state of sobbing, bitter exhaustion.

Occasional squalls slipped up behind them, and they obtained a little drinking water by sucking the water from their shirts, and sopping up the accumulations in the bottom of the dinghy. It was the sun that bothered them the most. They had no hats to protect them from its direct rays, and the glare from the water was slowly blinding them. Hayes in his graphic description of the ordeal said that his brain felt as if it was being "slowly melted away from his skull, rolling like sodden putty within the cranium on each monotonous, sickening roll of the dinghy." To add to their discomfort, sharks began to gather around the boat, in that uncanny way they have with becalmed craft at sea. Frequently, one of the monsters, bolder than the others, would bite into the keel and shake the dinghy violently, and then again they would nuzzle the sides curiously with their ugly snouts. They tried to scare them off by beating on the pails or striking the water with their hands, but it didn't work. There was always an ominous dorsal fin cutting the water about the dinghy.

Then they found no more coconuts in the sea. For three days they were without food and drink. One afternoon, Stelling, mad with thirst, tortured by the thimblefulls the light rains brought, leaped into the sea, opened his mouth and let the sea water pour into his stomach. Hayes declared that he and Liddell tried to haul him back in, but before they could a shark came up under him and tore his stomach away. When they got him back into the dinghy he was dead. Hayes ordered Liddell to throw his body back into the sea. Liddell shook his head and replied, "I'm not throwing good food to those sharks." Hayes stated he was revolted by the suggestion of eating human flesh. Liddell argued violently. "Stelling didn't die of any disease!" he cried. "His body, except for malnutrition and dehydration, is in a healthy condition!" Hayes withdrew to the stern. "I want no part of it," he informed Liddell. (So he told the Board of Inquiry.)

When Hayes awoke, as he contended, an hour or so later, he saw Liddell draining what blood he could from Stelling, and, as he watched, saw him drink it. He offered some to Hayes. "I refused, of course," Hayes told the Board.

Liddell informed Hayes he would try to make a broth of Stelling's flesh. There were two sheets of corrugated-iron in the bottom of the boat. One was bent around to form a stand for the bucket, and the other was used as a protective bottom for the boat, so a fire could be built in the dinghy. Liddell had a cigarette lighter, and they used the dry fibrous husks of the coconuts for tinder and the seat-boards and gratings of the dinghy for fuel. Liddell used his sheath-knife for the mutilation of Stelling. His knife was not too sharp and he had to hack savagely to cut Stelling's head off. It was a bloody, gruesome spectacle, Hayes declared, and he was seized with retching, and as there was nothing in his stomach, his whole body was wracked fearfully.

In the boat's roll, Stelling's head bowled back and forth in the bottom. Hayes, in his written statements, said he could not stand the sight and threw the grisly thing overboard. Liddell severed Stelling's right arm and sliced some flesh from his buttocks and hips, which he threw into the can of hot sea-water. He hoped the flesh would absorb the salt and chloride in the water, so the broth would be fit to drink. However, the flesh did not absorb the salt from the sea-water wholly, but the broth was drink and nourishment and Liddell forced Hayes to take some. Hayes also admitted he chewed a portion of the human flesh, which he declared was like tough bad-rate mutton.

To complete the cooking of Stelling's flesh, when the fuel ran out, Liddell was

able to repair the defective portable burner so it would function, and there was just sufficient petrol in it to finish the macabre chore.

HAYES gave only a brief account of Liddell's death. He declared that when he awoke from a feverish sleep three days later, Liddell was not in the dinghy. He believed that he either fell overboard while sleeping seated upright, or had purposely cast himself into the sea. The latter to him seemed logical, as Liddell had suffered a slight sun-stroke the day before and even before that had been babbling foolishly. From then on, until the dinghy drifted into Nengonengo's lagoon, Hayes was only conscious for short portions of the time. He was unable to cast Stelling's body overboard, because of his broken arm and weakened condition.

I had, at the time of the inquiry, my own ideas about what actually had happened. But the fact remains that Hayes was acquitted, chiefly I suppose because it was a legal technicality of a living man's testimony placing the blame upon a dead man. No witness could be produced to refute his words. However, there were many of the traders and schooner skippers in eastern Polynesia who had their own ideas of the actual sea tragedy.

During my routine duties on Nukurua Atoll, I occasionally thought of Hayes and wondered what nefarious dealings he was involved in at the time. I never expected to see him again, isolated as I was on this lonely low coral atoll of the Dangerous Islands. But coincidence is usually a design in retribution, and Bucky Hayes did come to my atoll and in his wake came an inexorable nemesis.

One morning a loud cry of *"Pahi! Schooner!"* brought me out to the veranda of the trading-store. Approaching obliquely to the atoll, under auxiliary-engine power, was an island schooner. I was surprised. A schooner was not due at Nukurua for at least three weeks. I distinctly had a premonition of disaster. Here in the Dangerous Isles a white man finds himself relying more and more on his primary impressions, and, like the islanders, forming judgments impulsively.

An hour or so later the trading-schooner came through the narrow reef passage and anchored in the northwestern pass opposite the native village. A long-boat was swung out on davits over the side and the Tahitian seamen lowered it and dropped down to the oars and started pulling strongly for the palm-shaded coral strand in front of my trading-store. As it came closer, I saw a man seated in the stern sheets, and as I watched he rose heavily and stood balancing himself with the tiller gripped between his knees. Dirty white trousers and a spotted, torn drill coat covered his gaunt body, while a large dilapidated native hat shaded a thin, unfriendly face. I stared unbelievingly. Hayes was the last person I would have expected or wanted to come to Nukurua. What was his mission here? Apart from his involvement in the cannibalistic killing, he had a very distasteful reputation in the islands. It was said he had killed a Chinese pearl buyer at Hao Atoll, claiming self-defense; his treatment of his native mistresses was sadistically cruel; and there was pending at one time in Papeete a charge of barratry against him. It was dismissed when witnesses refused to testify. I suspect he threatened or bribed them. Stories that could not have been just idle rumors were told of his gun-running activities in Central America and the transporting of aliens over the Mexican Border into the United States. I suspect that there was a price on his head in practically every country of the world. Now here he was walking up the beach toward the store, with the customary cold stare in his eyes. He made no motion to extend a hand for a friendly greeting.

"Hello," he said flatly. "I'm taking over at Mako Atoll. I understand you have an old windlass you want to get rid of. I can use it there for hauling up the pearl shell."

I considered him and his words with some astonishment. Mako Atoll, two hundred miles to the southeast of Nukurua, had not been worked by copra-workers and pearl divers for more than two years, But, more important, it was

a *tabu* island. In the ancient days of the Dangerous Islands, it had been used as a place of sepulchre for the dead high chiefs. It was also in a perfect hurricane belt. And the lagoon was a dangerous one, being deep and studded with coral ledges and caverns, the natural haunts for sharks and giant octopuses. The death of four veteran pearl divers had discouraged pearl diving there for more than two years, and the trading company had decided against seasonal work and trading on Mako Atoll thereafter. According to the Paumotuan natives, an evil superstition and curse hung over Mako. But occasionally a bold pearl diver would go to Mako and try to plumb the depths of the lagoon for the fabulous black pearls which were peculiar to this atoll. Indeed, the black pearls in the necklace which the Emperor Napoleon had presented to Josephine had come from Mako's dangerous underwater world, and many of the flawless matched midnight pearls in the Treasury of the Vatican in Rome were made in the pearl oysters of Mako Atoll. Now here was Bucky Hayes on his way to Mako to trade. How could he ever recruit copra workers and pearl divers, who were fearful of Mako's dread past?

"I've signed up some natives at Hikueru, and they'll be coming on next week," Hayes remarked, as if divining my thoughts. "I'm giving bonuses for the pearl diving." He handed me his papers. I scanned them briefly. It was a bonafide appointment of trader at Mako, and I had to affix my signature, inasmuch as Mako came within my sphere of control.

HE FOLLOWED me up to the veranda and sat down at the table. I brought out a bottle of gin and he poured himself a good measure.

"I expect to clean up on Mako and clear out of the islands," he said sourly. "I'll be glad to get back to civilization."

I was sure he would not be missed in Polynesia.

Hayes, still voicing complaints of his lot in the South Pacific, drew out a cigar case from his inside coat pocket and offered me one. Then he laid the case down on the table in front of him. I caught my breath sharply as I observed the case closer. It was of a light color, and in the center of each side was what appeared to be *a dried human nipple.* Noting my fixed stare upon it, he picked it up and turned it over in his hands, grinning.

"This case is made from the breasts of the only woman in the world I purposely killed. I was walking down a native street in Sumatra some years ago, when a mad native woman came rushing at me with a knife. I swung back my heavy walking-stick and gave her a couple of good whacks over the head, killing her instantly.

"I reported the attack to the authorities, who completely exonerated me from any blame. My only request was that they give me the woman's breasts. They saw no reason why I shouldn't have them. I pickled them and brought them back with me. Later, I tanned them and made this case."

I doubted his highly-flavored story, and opined he had picked it up in some curio store in the Asiatic archipelago, where natives occasionally sell handiwork made of human skin and bones. But that he gave the cigar case a personal-experience angle sickened me. He must have felt my antagonism.

He drained the rest of the gin from his tumbler and rose abruptly. "Well, I'll get back to the schooner. I'll send in some natives this afternoon to pick up the windlass."

"Are you planning to spend the night here?" I asked.

"No, we'll shove off as soon as a plank in the hull is fixed. We hit a coral ledge leaving Hikueru."

I watched him walk down the beach and step into the long-boat with some misgiving. He reminded me of some evil bird of doom, and his presence so close at hand bothered me, even if it was two hundred miles way.

I decided to get the windlass out of the warehouse and send it out to him myself. I didn't want to risk Hayes' coming ashore again, and possibly, with an eye to the pretty girls of Nukurua, deciding to spend the night in drinking and carousing. I had Roo supervise the

building of a crude platform between two large outrigger-canoes, and with much sweating and tugging we got the machinery aboard, lashed it down and started out to the schooner.

It was at siesta time, and when I climbed over the gunwales of the schooner I discovered that the native crew were asleep on the shaded forehatch. Hayes' form I saw curled up in the stern under the awning. I moved along the narrow deck quietly, so as not to awaken the natives. Hayes heard me coming, and he jumped to his feet nervously. The surprise and anger in his face was unmistakable, and so intense with pure hatred that I stopped short.

"I thought I'd bring out the windlass to save you a trip ashore," I said easily.

His head was inclined forward and he was breathing heavily. "What in hell are you pussyfooting around out here for?" he yelled hoarsely. "I told you I'd pick up the windlass."

I bridled. "There it is, take it or leave it!" I snapped.

The heads of two white men appeared suddenly above the companion-way of the sleeping-cabin. "What's all the row about?" the heavy-jowled, dark-haired one demanded irritably.

I turned to Hayes. "Your papers didn't list any white passengers," I said evenly. "Who are these men and what are they doing aboard?" It was within my power to question this irregularity.

Hayes cursed under his breath, and then jerked a thumb toward the two staring men. "That's Sam Johnson and Joe Somers—my partners."

Johnson, the squat dark man, came forward and shook my hand, while Somers, a gaunt, horse-faced man with sandy-colored hair and a mustache like a copper-wire brush, merely nodded indifferently.

"What are you partners in?" I inquired. "Your appointment doesn't say anything about white assistants."

"We've formed a little cooperative on the side," Hayes rapped out impatiently. At this precise moment, his cold fish eyes darted beyond me, and I saw his face writhe in an expression of alarm and then rage. He leapt forward. "Get out of that, you damn fool!" He was speaking to Roo, my assistant, who had just come over the side and had curiously lifted up the corner of a tarpaulin covering some deck cargo. Hayes pushed Roo roughly aside, ordering him down into the canoe. But in that brief second I had seen what was under the concealing canvas—diving-hoods and air-pumps!

I moved down quickly. "What do you expect to do with these?" I asked sharply.

Hayes stood defiantly in front of this deck stowage, cursing. "Pearl dive!" he yelled. "What else?"

"The French Colonial Government in Fakarava and Papeete forbid the use of diving machines in the Dangerous Islands," I announced with some heat. "You know that as well as I. It's a regulation that's been in force for years to protect the natives' natural occupation and to keep the pearl lagoons from becoming depleted." With my foot I snagged up another end of the tarpaulin. There were boxes of liquor stacked neatly alongside the diving-hoods. "You must expect to have a high old time with the diving at Mako. And I think you know the prohibition of liquor in the Dangerous Islands."

"We happen to be drinking men," Hayes rapped out defensively.

"You'd never be able to handle all that liquor in two years!" I retorted. "And you're only on Mako for four months."

"The natives will work better a bit crocked," Johnson interjected. "The atoll has a bad rep as a *tabu* place."

"Let's face it," muttered Hayes. "I'm not going to Mako for my health. I'm up here to make a killing. There should be some good pearls in the lagoon, and they'll be deep, so that's why I need these diving-hoods. The natives won't go deep in the lagoon, so I and the boys will have to. What skin is there off your nose if I make a little profit on the side? What has all your blind loyalty to the company got you? The company would sack you tomorrow if you didn't make this post pay off. You'd better get hep to yourself or you'll wind up one of these days on the beach with the rest of the bums."

"I'm putting myself on record as say-

ing I forbid the use of these diving-hoods and the selling of liquor on Mako," I said coldly.

"Since when have you been mixing up missionary hymn-singing with trading?" Hayes shouted, trembling with fury. "We'll do as we damned well please at Mako! You're only the resident trader in this section, not the administrator!"

"Yes, and as the resident trader I have a little something to say about what goes on at Mako!" I cried, losing my temper.

"Get off this schooner!" Hayes ordered me.

Somers and Johnson moved along the deck to back up his command. I knew that Roo and the other natives would come to my aid in the event of violence, but I wanted to spare bloodshed, and that most certainly is what would have happened had Hayes and I come to blows. I stepped down onto the platform beside the windlass and instructed the natives to paddle back to the beach.

"I might as well warn you men," I remarked, "that I intend to send in a report to the French officials in Tahiti."

"We'll be through with Mako by the time you get back a reply," Johnson laughed.

I realized this was true. With desultory schooner service, and the procrastination of the government departments in Tahiti, there was little hope of stopping Hayes and his companions from carrying on with an open hand at Mako.

HAYES' schooner left for Mako just before sunset, and on two or three occasions prior to his sailing I was sorely tempted to have the villagers surround the boat and forcibly remove the diving machines and liquor, but sane logic convinced me that I would be acting without authorized sanction, which might have serious repercussions for me. Also, as I have stated, I did not want to involve the Nukuruans in any dangerous altercation.

I was not to hear of activities on Mako Atoll until three weeks later, when a native sailing-canoe stopped by my island on its way to Tureia. The four natives had angry accounts to relate of the shameful indulgences on Mako. Hayes, from their first-hand reports, had turned the atoll into a place of bedlam, vice and corruption. Native women had been brought over from the adjoining atoll of Pitia, and drinking and debauchery were carried on all night. But far worse than this human decadence was the absolute fact that Hayes and his white companions were overseeing a clean sweep of the pearl oyster beds, unmindful of the careful propagation of the pearl oysters to insure a perpetual spreading of the mollusks. It is for this express purpose that the French government for generations had decreed the *rahui*, or sectional workings of the pearl lagoons, so that diving could be carried on year after year, rotating the areas of the lagoon. But the schooners were leaving Mako heavily laden with copra and pearl shell. The best persuader for making a native work is liquor, and Hayes and his men had plenty of that. As yet no pearls had been found, merely common seed-pearls of no intrinsic worth. The finding of pearls, in most cases, was a matter of luck. I surmised that the oceanic gods were having a laugh or two at Hayes and his diving-machines.

Then shocking news was to reach me. Hayes, claiming self-defense, had struck with a boat-hook a drunken, rebellious pearl diver, crushing his skull. The native had died instantly.

I felt it was time that I went to Mako and placed Hayes under technical arrest, pending a full inquiry. But before I could leave, two native gendarmes arrived with an electrifying report. An emaciated, dying white man had been found on the Atoll of Pifao. He had proven beyond the shadow of a doubt that he was Harold Liddell, former first mate of the *Merahi*. The rescue-schooner that had brought him to Papeete, Tahiti, had sought the safety of this uninhabited atoll-lagoon to wait out a bad squall, and there had found the fever-ridden man under a lean-to of palm-leaves. How he had subsisted on shell-fish, coconuts and raw fish all these months was beyond belief. He had inadvertently eaten a poisoned piece of fish, and when the schooner arrived at Pifao he was close to death. He survived

the voyage to Papeete, Tahiti, and just before he died made a detailed report on what happened in the dinghy following the wreck of the *Merahi*.

His confession, in substance, attested that there was just a small bottle of water in the boat, only enough, used sparingly, for one man's needs for a week. Hayes determined to be that man, going to any limit to see that the spark of life remained in his own body. He decided to dispose of Stelling first. Stelling, seated amidships, had dozed off. Then, suddenly, under a strong intuitive sense of danger, his eyes opened wide and fixed themselves upon Hayes crouched before him with an arm bent back and the hand grasping a sheath-knife. Stelling had made a supreme effort to jerk himself upright, but his heavy head lagged, the chin tilted upwards; and, in that instant, something white-hot seemed to leap out of the sunlight and burn its way deep into his throat.

Then Hayes had turned upon the dazed Liddell. "He's going to keep us alive. You'll help me cut him up, or you'll get the same."

But Liddell watched his chance to attack Hayes. One evening, he crept forward in the darkness to where the murderer was stretched out. He had heard him snoring, and felt now was the opportune time to dump overboard this crazed killer.

Liddell had underestimated Hayes. He realized this the instant he stepped over the amidships line of the boat. A shape rose quickly from the grating, a heavy blow struck Liddell on the back of the head, and the almost senseless man staggered backwards, lost his balance and toppled overboard. He sank slowly into the sea, face uppermost. To Hayes, leaning over and watching with callous interest in the starlight, Liddell's white face must have seemed to leer up at him malignantly, and the outstretched, swaying arms to wave a mocking farewell, until, caught by an undercurrent, the presumed dead man rolled over and faded into the blue.

But the cold water had revived Liddell. He rose, gasping and groaning, to the surface behind the dinghy. He had no strength to overtake it and chance another encounter with Hayes. Instead, to conserve his strength, he floated horizontally upon the slow surface swells. In this state he had drifted onto the reefs of the atoll of Pifao, where he had lived in vain hope of a passing schooner all these months.

The gendarmes had a warrant for Hayes' arrest.

I sailed with them the next morning for Mako. But when we arrived there, Johnson and Somers told us that Hayes, having by some mysterious source heard of Liddell's rescue and accusation, had taken a sailing-canoe and had fled the atoll southward. The gendarmes halted all pearl diving and work on Mako, and we immediately set sail in pursuit of the killer.

We searched the intervening seas between the Tuamotu and Gambier Group for a week. The second week we set a course to the east of Manga Reva. It was a lucky choice. Just after noon we sighted the wrecked sailing-canoe hung up on the reef of Rano Isle. We came ashore with loaded rifles, but they were unnecessary.

Nature had dealt more ably with Hayes than could we.

A squall had swept the craft onto the reefs in the darkness, from all indications, and Hayes had tried to reach the atoll mainland. He had stepped upon a growth of fan-coral which had broken, dropping him down through a maze of branching poisonous coral. The razor-sharp stalactites of coral had slashed him almost to the bone. Climbing upward out of his watery, coral trap, he had gashed himself the entire length of his burning, bleeding body. The effect of the coral poisoning had been slow.

He had writhed and screamed on the bare coral reef for hours, until death overtook him. When we found him he was not a pleasant sight. The blazing tropical sun had seared his naked body almost black; it was bloated grotesquely by the ensuing gangrenous gasses; he looked like nothing human. Death had transformed him into the aspect of his despicable mind. He was a Gorgon of humanity.

He was buried in the lonely sea, off Pifao.

THE CAMP-FIRE

Where Readers, Writers and Adventurers Meet

PLENTY of fuel stacked up to feed the *Camp-Fire* this month, so suppose we just step back into the shadows and let the story-tellers build up the blaze with their own comments. Frederick Wilkins—whose long novelette laid in medieval France, "Master Adam, Cutthroat," opens this issue—tells us about the Free Companies, those roving bands of mercenaries whose deadly longbows were for hire to the highest bidder in the grim days that followed the Black Plague in Europe. Gangsters — Fourteenth Century-style!

I have done extensive work on medieval Europe--as a matter of fact I began as a fairly respectable historian and drifted into writing as a protest against work. Anyway, the study of medieval warfare, besides various university monographs, left a pile of incidental material on the Hundred Years War.

This is a very interesting age, politically, socially, and certainly in the field of combat. This was the day of the Black Prince and the high peak of chivalry—and the end of chivalry, though it would be a long time before men found this out. It was the day of the terrible long boy and the beginning of gunpowder in war. And it was the day of the Free Companies, of the adventurers.

Master Adam is fictional, but there were many such men who managed to leave a name for themselves. We are accustomed to thinking of the Hundred Years War as a century-long conflict; as a matter of fact it was a series of campaigns, actually raids by the English, with long periods of what passed for peace in between. During the off years the disbanded soldiers, both French and English, banded together into Free Companies and lived as best they could.

Some of these units had a definite organization far superior to the Feudal mobs that still passed for armies. The English bands were composed largely of archers and were tough outfits to handle. It is an interesting sidelight to note that the name brigand comes from the leather jackets they wore—the brigantine was a double thickness of leather, with iron plates sewn in over the chest. The raiders were so identified with this type of armor that any bandit became a brigand.

Gunpowder was in use at the time of the story. It is a matter of history that the English used cannon at Crécy, the first definite use in the field, though there is pretty conclusive proof that the new weapon had been employed in Granada the preceding century.

Roger Bacon must have known of gunpowder, and Fletcher, with his years at Oxford, would have had some contact with what was considered as little more than a toy. From about 1340 or so gunpowder was in fairly common use in sieges and well out of the fad stage in field combat, but the English were so impressed with the power of the long bow that they didn't seriously turn to firearms until the days of the Tudors.

There might be some wonder at the part of the Bishop in the story, but a few sidelights will clear this up. The Church of the Fourteenth Century was a political football. A King of France had hauled the Pope

to Avignon in 1309 and kept the Papacy in France until 1377, in what would be called the second Babylonian Captivity.

The high Church offices were purely political appointments and used as pawns in international dealings. As nobles were made Bishops and Cardinals they naturally didn't lose interest in affairs of temporal nature—in most cases they considered their Church position secondary. Some of the best military minds of the Middle Ages were Churchmen, who despite Papal wishes and commands, swung mace and morning star with the best.

Since it was forbidden to shed "blood by the sword," Bishops employed the mace, morning star, or war hammer—none of which employed a cutting edge—and thus stayed within the letter of the law.

The average noble of the age was a third or fourth generation descendant of some man who had been stronger than his fellows and set up as boss of a district; Kings were merely bigger nobles. That is why many of the Free Company captains wished to go to Italy, where it was still possible to grab off a nice hillside and a castle. In the course of the wars that devastated France during the Fourteenth Century many a smart man established a family that lasted until the Revolution.

Lesser nobles hired Free Company troops to beat down the big boys and take their lands, and the great nobles, even as the English ravaged the land, sought ways to undermine the power of the King and increase their own holdings. In the end the Kings made a deal with the townsmen and did in the nobility, but for a time the nobles and the Free Companies and adventurers had a field day.

Finally Du Guesclin, the great Constubal of France, made a great appeal to the adventurers and led them into Spain to fight the English, where by great good fortune and skillful maneuvering he managed to get them killed. This ended the days of the Free Company in France, for before many years would come Joan and the final expulsion of the English—and the rise of a united France.

FROM BLACKBURN, who wrote the tall-timber tale, "Donkey Camp" on page 39, chops off a chunk or two to toss onto the *Camp-Fire* by way of introducing himself. Incidentally, note that it's the timber that's tall, not the tale, for Tom prides himself on being a stickler for getting his facts straight. See below—

Authenticity is a fetish with me. To an author of fiction concerning western America—which has been my special field for over ten years—timber stories are a delight. The great industries of the historic West are now mostly dead or so materially changed as to make on-the-spot research fruitless. Most color must come from books and recollections once removed from the source. The wagon freighters, the pan-and-rocker miners, the big ranches of history are gone. So are the railroad builders of the past. But in the timber country the counterparts of pioneers in the industry still fell the lumber the country endlessly needs. And methods efficient seventy years ago are still efficient and in use. There are hundreds of mills and operations—yes, and donkey-camps—still functioning. They are hospitable places. Lumbermen are proud of their industry and their friendliness toward anyone sincerely interested in it is astonishing. I have discovered this repeatedly through the years.

On a research trip—which is an author's dodge at home for what may actually be a hunting or fishing trip—I ran across the outfit responsible for the writing of "Donkey Camp." As usual on such trips, my companion was Robert Coleman Du Soe, and Bob is a 16mm movie enthusiast. The high-rigger in this northern California camp actually delayed topping a new spar they were rigging, for two days, waiting for clear weather so that Bob could shoot a good picture of the operation. While he waited, he showed us the best way to camp-cook steelhead and told me more about the workings of a donkey-camp than can be found in the ten best books of timbering. Rails and trucks have supplanted flumes in the part of the country we were in, but I had seen them elsewhere and a good story must be a composite thing as far as background goes, most of the time. Therefore the *ponderosa* pine and the donkey-camp were California; the flume was Puget Sound; and the curious kind of competitive bid for a cutting contract old John Mackay imposed on the rival camps of Kerrigan and Gerson was strictly out of the wild redwood cutting days of Albion, Little River, and and Mendocino City, along the redwood coast of California. But all of them belonged to the big woods.

Personal statistics: I am married; the father of two boys and a girl; author of magazine stories, books, and motion pictures on the Western scene; a dryfly trout fisherman; and young enough to enjoy it all for some time to come.

FROM New York City to Serbia, an education abroad, and back to the States; from motorcycling, motorboating and private flying to industrial photography, advertising, salesmanship and the study of whaling—there's a varied and colorful career indeed for any one man. (And we'd better say something nice about this guy because he's also a recognized expert on judo!) But Charles Yerkow modestly lets "The Whale That Whistled Back" (see page 48) do his blowing for him—

I was born 35 years ago in New York City not far from the scows and barges of the East River; got high-school-educated in Serbia, Europe, and at the age of 16 returned to pick up English by going back to Public School. I remember back in Serbian school standing by the stove in the cold winters and making up stories for Serbians, Hungarians, Germans and Russians; my teachers failed to appreciate this, and in other ways others considered me a bad boy —they were most likely right. To offset this erroneous conception, I joined the Boy Scouts, and later was elected Scout Master.

Not being as practical a man as Captain Lorro in my story, I took up photography for a hobby, and followed it up with motorcycling, motorboating, and flying. Everything that cost like the blazes! Held a Private license for something like three years, in the old 1931 vintage Wacos, Travelaires, Moths, Eaglerocks, etc. One day I witnessed a judo bout, so I started studying it from the ground up (and let me say those early falls were terrific). Worked as a salesman for ten years and didn't like it but stuck to it because my boss seldom objected to my writing on his time.

Just before the war, I ghost-wrote an article on modern pelagic whaling, and, in order to understand what I was going to write about, had to view thousands of feet of motion picture film shot by the third engineer of the whaler. Thus I became interested in motion picture cameras and whaling.

Around this time I was writing free-lance aviation and photographic stuff for magazines in New York and Chicago, then went to work in a war plant manufacturing electronic equipment, but ended up as their advertising and industrial photographer. Worked daytimes in the plant, wrote articles when I got home, and spent my nights at the Y teaching judo to several groups. All this ended when my book, *Modern Judo*, was published.

At the present all my time is spent writing fiction, specializing in the New Guinea and Arafura Seas locale. For purposes of the story, "The Whale That Whistled Back" had to take place off the east-Australia coast.

I suppose this whistling whale story came about through my ghosting that article and having some sort of deep-rooted interest in the sea, ships, and men. Myself, I get violently sea-sick on the ferry on rough weather.

The first time I heard about the whistling whale off Provincetown was in 1944, and after I spent considerable time on research. Today my little file bulges with material on both land and pelagic whaling. Yes, as Joseph outlines, a whale *could* whistle; by the same token a whale in some prehistoric times walked, for all indications are that this mammal at one time sported hind legs. It's a great and wonderful subject, what with so little known about it (ever think of putting a herd of whales into a tank to study their ways of life?). Did you know, for instance, that a sperm whale will battle the giant squid, and win? Or that the only whale that can back up is the killer whale? So 'tis, mate.

But it took seven rewrites to put "The Whale That Whistled Back" into proper shape. Friends who read the drafts used to ask, "But what made him whistle?" Well, if I tell that, there's no story. Another thing, I used to tell short anecdotes about Joseph, the lookout, and Captain Lorro, and friends remarked, "You talk about them as if they really existed."

Maybe they did.

CAPTAIN EDWIN SIMMONS of the Marine Corps—who tells the tale of the American Revolutionary officer and the Hessian dragoons, "Guns for the General"—sends us the following notes to accompany his first appearance in *Adventure*—

"Guns for the General" was a long time developing. I was born across the Delaware River from the scene of the story on what was the site of Fort Billings and is now Paulsboro, N. J. That was in 1921. Since that time I've maintained a continued interest in things military, particularly the Revolutionary and the Civil War. "Guns for the General" is well-grounded historically. There were many such raids made on British supply lines by American partisans. A careful historian might object, however, to my use of Hessian dragoons as most of the German mercenaries were actually foot soldiers.

I have just short of seven years in the Marine Corps, having resigned an Army reserve commission on my graduation from Lehigh in 1942 in order to accept a Marine commission. Even before the war I had planned on combining a military and writing career. It has worked out pretty well, at least to my own personal satisfaction. I spent an undistinguished 26 months in the Pacific at all the usual places, winding up in China, a country which holds a continued fascination for me. During most of this time I free-lanced which is a nice way of saying I wrote a great many articles and stories, some of which were used. For the last three years I have been managing editor of the Marine Corps *Gazette*, a job I like very much.

My favorite field is historical fiction and biography, preferably with a military frontier slant. I write rather slowly, doing a great deal of preliminary research. Altogether I suppose I have had between twenty-five and thirty stories and articles published in various military and men's magazines.

Last May I married a pretty little girl who promised to type my manuscripts; as yet she hasn't done so. We live just now in Fredericksburg, Va., which is a good place for a historically-minded person to live.

(Continued on page 123)

ASK ADVENTURE

Information You Can't Get Elsewhere

IN THE LAND of the Conquering Lion of Judah.

Query:—I have been interested in Ethiopia and its ancient culture since the barbarous and brutal Italian invasion.

I have often wondered what changes were precipitated by the Italian aggression. When the slaves were freed, I wondered whether these unfortunates were able to make a living by themselves. I know that Haile Selassie had long been in favor of freeing the slaves, but that he favored gradual manumission because of the tremendous economic problem involved. I am curious to know whether any government provision has been made for freedmen and whether or not some of them haven't stayed on in the plantations of their former masters.

I also am curious to learn whether British troops have been withdrawn from Ethiopia and whether the Emperor has recovered his complete prerogatives. And I wonder what the status of the Gallas and other tribes is.

—Thomas Q. Lempertz
6162 Hollywood Blvd.
Hollywood, Calif.

Reply by Gordon MacCreagh:—As to the slave question in Ethiopia: Part of the Italian propaganda was that their aggression was motivated largely by the noble and altruistic purpose of "freeing the poor slaves." As a matter of fact Haile Selassie had already, some five years previously, given freedom to all his personal slaves, had urged all local chiefs to do the same, and had promulgated some very well thought-out laws to ensure complete eradication of slavery within the generation. For example:

1. No existing slave might be sold, exchanged, or given away.

2. No person might buy a slave or trade in slaves—and that law had teeth; the penalty, death!

3. All slave children were automatically free. A school was endowed for the training of such children and, when trained, they were to have priority over all other candidates for such jobs as they were fitted for. Any slave, mistreated, could bring court action and gain freedom.

Thus, as you see, existing slaves were protected from the horrid business of being sold away from their families and the system

would quietly die out without disruption of the social structure. All of which seems to me to have been a more sensible way of handling the problem than the one WE chose.

A sidelight that throws some illumination on the current condition of slaves is that many of the more enlightened chiefs did follow H. S's example and free their slaves—and they refused to go!

"What?" they said. "Go out and work for our living like those coolies who are free? Not for us!"

One Ethiop whom we knew gave a feast to his hundred slaves and made a ceremony of their manumission. For which they shouted and hoorawed and then reminded him that his honor forbade that he should *throw* them out and they liked it right there and would stay. The only difference that freedom made was that they worked harder than before for fear that they would be thrown out.

The Italian occupation, I am compelled to say—though this is opposed to our patriotic religion that there can be no benefits from aggression—was an enormous benefit to Ethiopia. It forced upon the backward people a realization of modernity; it commenced industries; it taught scientific agriculture as the land-poor Italians knew it; AND it built roads, magnificent roads, as the Italians have always built ever since the Roman times.

All at a cost, it must be admitted, of war and lives. Frightful, huh? Yet those lives have already been replaced by the savings in the more frightful child mortality that had been prevalent before the Italians introduced some rudiments of sanitation into a country where there had heretofore existed just three flush system toilets and where even the ill' ol' backhouse was unknown, where people rather used the stream banks—and washed laundry in the same stream and *drank* out of it.

All in all, while the country has immediately slipped back to its former apathy, the Italian occupation at least showed what civilization was and left a mark to aim at. Ethiopia has emerged as a better country to live in—for the white man.

Irrelevant is the question whether white man civilization is a desirable aim for Africa.

British troops have withdrawn from Ethiopia—completely. But in the treaty of withdrawal remains a proviso that the British have the right to appoint "advisers" to various departments of the Ethiopian government. The theory is—and has its justification—that Ethiopia has a militarily strategic value and that Great Britain, (with our own concurrence and support), *must* be assured that the country remains potentially a useful ally. Accordingly there are some hundred and ten of these "advisers" planted in strategic positions in the rather chaotic local bureaucracy. They have no official power, but can exert pressure—and can, incidentally, steer into British channels any commercial development that seems worthwhile. Ourselves, who had a most-favored-nation IN, have remained asleep and some of our brashly crude methods—particularly the color line issue—have left us as much disliked as we seem to have managed for ourselves in some other places where our ebullient Americanism has exploded.

Gallas and lesser tribes: The Gallas still don't believe that they have been subjugated by the Ethiopians, and any Ethiop going into Galla country goes with lots of escort. Other tribes within the Empire are, or are not, amenable depending upon whether the

(Continued on page 118)

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Died in a corner—
With a bag of peanuts beside him
And three lead bullets inside him.

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SPORTS AND HOBBIES

American Folklore and Legend: *Songs, dances, regional customs; African survivals, religious sects; voodoo*—HAROLD PRESCE, c/o *Adventure*

Archery—EARL B. POWELL, c/o *Adventure*.

Auto Racing—WILLIAM CAMPBELL GAULT, 4828 N. Elkhart Ave., Milwaukee 11, Wis.

Baseball—FREDERICK LIEB, c/o *Adventure*.

Basketball—STANLEY CARHART, 99 Broad St., Mattawan, N. J.

Big Game Hunting in North America: *Guides and equipment*—A. H. CARHART, c/o *Adventure*.

Boxing—COL. JEAN V. GROMBACH, c/o *Adventure*.

Camping and Outdoor Cookery—PAUL M. FINK, Jonesboro, Tenn.

Canoeing—H. S. M. KEMP, 501 10th St., E., Prince Albert, Sask., Canada.

Coins and Medals—WILLIAM L. CLARK, American Numismatic Society, Broadway at 156th, N. Y. C.

Dogs—JACK DENTON SCOTT, R.F.D., Roxbury, Conn.

Fencing—COL. JEAN V. GROMBACH, c/o *Adventure*.

Fishing, Fresh water: *Fly and bait casting; bait casting outfits; fishing trips*—JOHN ALDEN KNIGHT, 929 W. 4th St., Williamsport, Penna.

Fishing, Salt water: *Bottom fishing, surf casting; trolling; equipment and locations*—C. BLACKBURN MILLER, c/o *Adventure*.

Fly and Bait Casting Tournaments—"CHIEF" STANWOOD, East Sullivan, Maine.

Hiking—DR. CLAUDE P. FORDYCE, c/o *Adventure*.

Horses and Horsemanship — JOHN RICHARD YOUNG, c/o *Adventure*.

Motor Boating—GERALD T. WHITE, Montville, N. J.

Motorcycling: *Regulations, mechanics, racing*—CHARLES M. DODGE, c/o *Adventure*.

Rifles, Pistols, Revolvers: *American and Foreign*—DONEGAN WIGGINS, 170 Liberty Rd., Salem Oregon.

Shotguns: *American and foreign; wing shooting and field trials; gunsmithing*—ROY S. TINNEY, Brielle, N. J.

Skiing—WILLIAM C. CLAPP, The Mountain Book Shop, North Conway, N. H.

Small Boating: *Skiffs, outboard, small launch, river and lake cruising*—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, 11331 Burin Ave., Inglewood, Calif.

Swimming—LOUIS DEB. HANDLEY, 115 West 11th St., N. Y., N. Y.

Track—JACKSON SCHOLZ, R. D. No. 1, Doylestown, Pa.

Woodcraft—PAUL M. FINK, Jonesboro, Tenn.

Wrestling—MOREL E. THRUSH, New York, Athletic Club, 59th St. and 7th Ave., N. Y., N. Y.

SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL SUBJECTS

Anthropology: *American, north of the Panama Canal; customs, dress, architecture, pottery and decorative arts, weapons and implements, fetishism, social divisions*—ARTHUR WOODWARD, Los Angeles Museum, Exposition Park, Los Angeles, Calif.

Entomology: *Insects and spiders; venomous and disease-carrying insects*—DR. S. W. FROST, 465 E. Foster Ave., State College, Penna.

Forestry, North American: *The U. S. Forestry Service, our national forests, conservation and use*—A. H. CARHART, c/o *Adventure*.

Forestry, Tropical: *Tropical forests and products*—WM. R. BARBOUR, care of U. S. Forest Service, Glenn Bldg., Atlanta, Ga.

Herpetology: *Reptiles and amphibians*—CLIFFORD H. POPE, c/o *Adventure*.

Mining, Prospecting, and Precious Stones: *Anywhere in North America, Prospectors' outfitting; any mineral, metallic or non-metallic*—VICTOR SHAW, c/o *Adventure*.

Photography: Outfitting, work in out-of-the way places; general information—PAUL L. ANDERSON, **36 Washington St., East Orange, N. J.**

Radio: *Telegraphy, telephony history; receiver construction, portable sets*—DONALD McNICOL, c/o ***Adventure.***

Railroads: *In the United States, Mexico and Canada*—E. T. NEWMAN, 701 N. Main St., Paris, Ill.

Sawmilling: HAPSBURG LIEBE, c/o ***Adventure.***

Taxidermy—EDWARD B. LANG, 14 N. Burnett St., East Orange, N. J.

Wildcrafting and Trapping—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, 11331 Burin Ave., Inglewood, Calif.

MILITARY, NAVAL AND POLICE

United States Army—COL. R. G. EMERY, U.S.A. Ret., c/o ***Adventure.***

United States Coast Guard—LIEUT. C. B. LEMON, U.S.C.G., Ret., Box 221, Equinunk, Wayne Co., Penna.

United States Marine Corps—MAJ. ROBERT H. RANKIN, U.S.M.C.R., c/o ***Adventure.***

United States Navy—LIEUT. DURAND KIEFER, U.S.N., Ret., Box 74, Del Mar, Calif.

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GEOGRAPHICAL SUBJECTS

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★New Zealand, Cook Island, Samoa—TOM L. MILNS, 27 Bowen St., Feilding, New Zealand.

★Australia and Tasmania—ALAN FOLEY, 243 Elizabeth St., Sydney, Australia.

★South Sea Islands—WILLIAM McCREADIE, No. 1 Flat "Scarborough," 86 Sidney Rd., Manley, N. S. W., Australia.

Hawaii, Christmas, Wake, Canton, Midway and Palmyra Islands—CARL J. KUNZ, 211-3 Nasha, Kahului, Maui, T.H.

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(Continued from page 114)

current chief thinks he can do better for himself by paying tribute for protection from the neighbors, or by going feudin' n' fussin' n' fightin' on his own.

IDENTIFYING an old-timer.

Query:—I am taking the liberty of asking you to clear up the identity of a rifle which I have just inherited from the estate of an uncle. This appears to be a real old-timer and to date I have been unable to find out just what it is from any local gun sharp.

It is a target rifle marked J. A. Stevens A.&T. Co. Chicopee Falls, U.S.A. On the opposite side of the barrel is the marking, 25.21. The action carries the serial number, 10.193.

The rifle has a 26 in. barrel round for 18 in. from muzzle and hexagonal the rest of the way to receiver. It has single-shot lever action and set triggers. The forearm extends to about seven in. of muzzle. The caliber appears to be .25 as near as can be told without tools to measure it properly. There is also a cheek piece on the stock. Outside diameter of barrel is ¾ in. at muzzle.

The original sights are not on the gun as it has a telescopic sight which is also a mystery as it has no sign of a maker's name on it but appears to be a very good sight on examination. Stock and cheek piece are black walnut. The rifle is in very good condition and several local men have indicated an interest in buying it but, not knowing what it is worth, or in fact, what it is, I don't want to let it go until I do know and maybe not at all if it is worth keeping.

—Albert Jenkins
Youngstown, Ohio

Reply by Donegan Wiggins:—You have a fine rifle, but for an obsolete cartridge, no longer procurable, alas. The .25-21-86 was furnished in both Winchester and Stevens single-shot target rifles, of which I owned the former many years ago.

The cartridge was a straight shell type, adapted to loads of different power, and was a handloader's pet. I fussed about till I finally got a load that outshot my holding, and then, as the lads at the turkey shoots refused to let me participate with the rifle, I disposed of it. There is a similar rifle, of plain finish and with open sights, in a local pawnshop here at the present time.

If the action is of the rocking-back block type, the Model .44, all that could be done is to alter it to take the 25.20 W.C.F. repeating rifleloading, as the local gunsmith does for around five dollars, as this cartridge is a popular one still. BUT, if the block is of the .44½ type, dropping straight down when the lever is opened, supported by the sides of the frame, or receiver, it can be re-barreled for the .22 hornet, and make a fine modern high speed hawk or crow-and-woodchuck rifle. Any good gunsmith can determine this easily.

HAWAIIAN Paradise Lost!

Query:—I am a retired Army man and have spent about six years in the Islands. I am thinking of returning to live there and would like to know if a single man could live comfortably there on an income of $175 a month. Also, is there a housing shortage and are there any small houses for sale?

—Charles Roland
Rt. 7, Box 1159
No. Sacramento, Calif.

Reply by Carl J. Kunz:—Your income, Mr. Roland, wouldn't go very far in Honolulu or anywhere else on the island of Oahu unless you augmented it by obtaining gainful employment. There is a good chance you can live comfortably on one of the outer islands, but only if your idea of comfort includes the basic necessities of living, and excludes driving a car—unless you own one outright—and other luxuries.

The days of living in a grass shack along the beach are no more. And that also applies to those days when one could hire a mama-san for two-and-a-half a week to cook, clean house, and do the family washing. Today, if there were any grass shacks, they'd rent for sixty per month, and mama-san's services are cheap at fifteen bucks a week. Even the yard boy has gone the way of all good things—he's gone into politics or passes out handbills for the ILWU. I remember that one could hire a yard boy for fifty cents a day plus his lunch—and that was as late as 1942!

There are many retired servicemen living out here on incomes no greater than yours. One purchased a small shack back down the coast, grows his own vegetables, manages to throw a monthly binge, and, according to the grapevine, took unto himself a housekeeper just recently. There are others who are more or less fortunate. One suns himself externally until someone comes along and stops to chat with him. After regaling them with stories, he attempts to sell them a ball-point pen. If he is successful, he wanders to the Wailuku Gardens where he suns himself internally with wine or scotch. Others, more enterprising, dabble in various hobbies to augment their pensions.

For a while, one or two retired servicemen lived at the Puunene Plantation Club where board cost about $100.00 per month. I lived there during the first months I was out here and found it quite satisfactory. The club is right inside the plantation town and offers peace and rest. The food was quite excellent at the time. I'm afraid that board may have been increased since then, so the costs now may be far too great for the size of your pension.

The most satisfactory plan is to rent a small place, raise your own vegetables, and develop a paying hobby to take in the slack. One can buy small homes, but the prices

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are rather high. Even land, in the most desirable areas, comes high. There is no building code, so one can always buy a beach lot and throw up almost anything.

I'm enclosing a clipping from one of the local newspapers. While I don't know anything about the house and lot advertised, I can say that it is located in a very nice part of the island. Hana is quite remote from the main part of the island, but it is the tourist center. Travel folders advertise it as Heavenly Hana while tourists ante up twenty dollars a day at the hotel. The place is owned by Paul Fagan of San Francisco.

I might warn you that food is about twenty-five percent higher here than back there on the mainland. However, by careful selection and judicious buying, one can do quite nicely. A single man who does his own cooking can make out a menu that may keep his food bill down to fifty or sixty dollars a month, but he'd have to forego steaks and chops except on special occasions. He can always go fishing and lobstering.

SMALL boat—rough water.

Query:—I am writing about a particular type of small boat.

I will be located close to Coos Bay, Oregon, this summer. I have a five horsepower outboard motor and will wish to do some running around on the open ocean. I will not be trying for any fancy speed and will probably be fishing a good part of the time. Most of it I expect will be done on the open ocean instead of in the sheltered bays.

I learned to use outboards on some pretty rough salt water up in Alaska during the war, and fell in love with the dory type of boat. I would like to get something in this line. I will be doing a lot of running around, and will be pulling up to the beaches a lot. Probably some clam digging, quite a bit of surf fishing, some trolling, some just traveling. In my opinion the dory is just about right for this.

I would like to know about what a 16-18 foot dory would cost me in Oregon. My funds are limited, but if you have any preferences in the line of other type boats, in the reasonable price field, I would appreciate it very much if you would give me particulars.

I understand that for the boat I will have to have a registration number, oars, life preservers, port and starboard lights, a white stern light, and some type of horn for signaling. Can you tell me what else I will need?

—Don Allen
Rt. 2, Blackfoot, Idaho

Reply by R. S. Spears:—The dory model has proved itself in the New England fisheries. It rides the heaving billows of the open seas. This was with oars.

The outboard motor is used with many models, from canoe to special designs. And

you'll do better to look over the small boats out of Coos Bay waters, as used there and modified there for the local conditions, in and outside waters.

It commonly happens that local commercial fishermen in all locales modify designs, models, to meet local conditions. You will find that the local professional boatmen work into the best kind of craft for local conditions. Strong, well-riding, economical craft are the local rule for local commercial boats. A sportsman can do no better than get the local model craft, but building it in lighter weight.

The waterproof plywood small boats, properly built give you the modern craft. They cost more, but they are so light in weight that they take the place, especially for sport utility, of boats far heavier. Commercial craft often prove better made of plywood than heavier construction—and not so strong—especially where speed and capacity are factors.

Look over the local conditions before you choose; I have found it good practice to go with commercial fishermen and other professional watermen looking their needs and methods over.

In addition to the dory models, batteaux models have advantages. The Oregon-Washington coasts had famous canoes in Indian days.

For your purposes it is obvious you'll run the whole course of watercrafting—deep-sea, along shore, and inland waters. You'll probably find yourself searching for an "all around" boat—a mighty difficult thing to find—like an "all around" rifle, dog, fish rod. However, you'll find the effort of trying to satisfy all your needs mighty interesting and informative—good practice. And it may be best to get a commercial model in lightweight plywood, though your plans indicate two types of boat—deep water and inland water craft.

HERDING sheep and fighting bears.

Query:—I would like to know about sheepherding around Billings. How do these sheepherders live? How far are they from the ranches? Do they use sheep dogs? What is the land around Billings like? I would also like some information about bears and bearfighting. What would be the certain way of killing a bear?

Our library here is not very extensive so I decided to write to you. Thank you for your assistance in this matter.

—M. R. Carey
700 Woodland Avenue
Ellwood City, Pa.

Reply by Fred Egelston:—First; Regarding sheepherders: They carry tents, bedding and grub on a pack horse and set up camp for several days at a time while the sheep graze off the grass in the vicinity, then move to another location. They may

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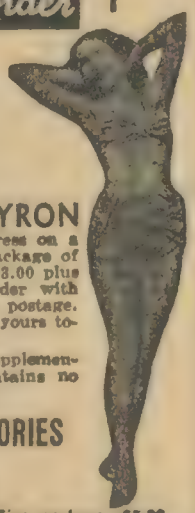
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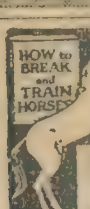

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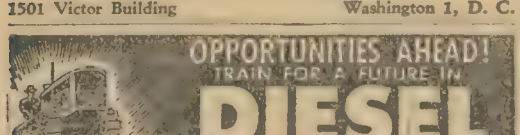

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be miles from their own or any other ranch. They have one or more dogs. An outfit with several bands of sheep, each with its own herder, will send a supply wagon out once or twice a month to take care of the men's needs, as the general location of each band is known at headquarters.

The smaller outfits depend on herders carrying their own supplies and keeping themselves supplied from the nearest town. The land around Billings is rolling prairie, most of it being under irrigation.

Now, as to killing bears: The most certain way to kill a bear that I know of is to shoot him with a rifle—30.-40 or bigger.

GOING skiing this August?

Query:—I am writing to you to inquire about a ski resort in Chile. I would appreciate any information you could give me on the subject such as the winter season there, what the rates are, and what facilities they have. I believe the resort is called Portillo and if I remember correctly, Emil Allais is an instructor there.

—Robert Pegue
New York City

Reply by Edgar Young:—The seasons of the south temperate zone are reversed from what they are up here and our mid-summer season corresponds to mid-winter in Chile. It sounds strange to hear them speaking of what a cold August they had last year, etc.

The skiier can find thrills in Chile for five months of the year and some enthusiasts claim it is superior to either Switzerland or the Rockies in some respects, and equal in others. At Portillo, high up in the Cordillera, near the Argentine frontier, he will find one of the show places of South America. They have luxurious accommodations, ski instructors, automatic ski-tows and everything necessary for skiing comfort. The Portillo Hotel, opened in 1944, is most modern, and overlooks Laguna Del Inca, one of the highest volcanic lakes in the world. Here they not only have skiing but tobogganing, skating, and many other diversions. For the sophisticated skier who is satisfied with mountain *refugios* (good food, comfortable beds, fireplaces) he will find them at Lagunillas, Llaima, Farellones, and Villarica, all off the beaten track but within easy reach of the capital, Santiago, by train or bus, and the rates are very low.

Emil Allais was an instructor there but I am not sure whether he is still there. Prices at Hotel Portillo run from 200 to 300 pesos, which is about five dollars, American Plan.

If you will write the manager of the hotel, Los Andes, Chile, by airmail, he may be able to tell you if Allais will be there for the next skiing season, also request photos of the hotel and skiing areas; you may get some useful information about the sport as it is engaged in down there.

THE END

(Continued from page 112)

Captain Simmons sent us a couple of copies of the Marine Corps *Gazette*, which we found mighty enjoyable and informative reading. We hope he won't mind if we mention an anecdote we got a kick out of, in an article by Lieut.-Col. Woodrow M. Kessler on the training of Marine recruits at Parris Island. Seems that a hard-bitten drill instructor has a squad of new men lined up for a little indoctrination in Marine discipline. "Now," he tells the bewildered rookies, "when I says 'Jump!' ya *jumps*." The men are ready, willing and eager. The drillmaster snaps the order. The rookies leap obediently into the air and settle back into position—only to find themselves the target for a withering barrage of choice invective. "Of all the stupid knuckleheads!" roars the Leatherneck. "Did I tell ya to come back down?"

WILMON MENARD—no newcomer to these pages—we printed his "Escape to Takura" back in the August issue—appends a few additional notes on his adventurous career, to accompany the gruesome tale of cannibalism in the South Seas—"The Wreck of the Merahi"—

It might interest your *Camp-Fire* readers that I have lived for over four years in the setting of the story (Tahiti, Dangerous Isles, Gambier Group), now trader, now pearl diver, sometimes beachcomber. I went into the Tuamotu Group as a trader. I soon found that these isles had not been called *Les Iles Dangereuses* for nothing. They are lonely, half-drowned atolls, barely more than five feet above high-water mark, ravaged by squalls and hurricanes, with treacherous coral ledges just awash to slice open the keels of copra schooners and pearling luggers. There are sharks, octopuses, giant killer-eels, and deadly barracuda in the pearl lagoons of the Tuamotu (Dangerous Archipelago). Honore Laval, the Mad Priest of Manga Reva (Gambier Group), which adjoins the Tuamotu Group, tried to erect here his personal South Seas kingdom, slaughtering more than eight thousand natives in his crazed plan for empire. However, with all these bleak comments on the Dangerous Islands, it must be said that they are very picturesque paradise atolls, with blue lagoons, waving coconut palms, azure skies and happy peoples. Stalwart divers descend to great depths in the lagoons to bring up fabulous moon-pearls. And tragedy sometimes strikes, as in the case of "The Wreck of the Merahi."

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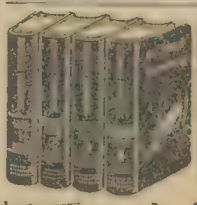

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AND here's a brief, belated note on herpetology (snakes to you and me) which we received from D. K. Findlay. Remember his story of the hunt for the giant python—"More Venomous of the Two"—which appeared last month? Anyway, we're going to be very cautious next time we go snake-hunting—in the wilds of the Bronx Zoo.

When I was young, I put my bare foot into a hole occupied by a garter snake and her innumerable children, and ever since I've had a horrified interest in snakes.

Stories about big snakes usually exaggerate their size. The authorities say that the Reticulated Python is probably the largest snake in the world. One specimen measured just under 30 feet, but a 22-foot snake would be a good length. That's long enough. A 22-footer would weigh 225-250 pounds and, they say, could overpower a man. He would not swallow him though, if the man were wearing clothes.

The big pythons kill by constriction, the pressure of their coils. They have long recurved teeth but no venom. They live almost entirely on warm-blooded mammals. In captivity they are fed on chickens or pigs and get a meal every two weeks. The nervous organization of a snake is easily upset, and when they are upset they will not feed. Sometimes they will starve to death with food in reach. In zoos when a snake will not eat, it is sometimes fed by force—held out straight while a chicken or a rabbit is forced down its throat with a long pole.

FREEMAN LLOYD, who for many years has acted as our Ask Adventure kennel expert, tells us that he is practically retiring from writing on dogs, is moving to Tampa, Florida, and can no longer look after these queries for the magazine. Mr. Lloyd suggested that his successor as Gun Dog Editor on *Field & Stream*—Jack Denton Scott—also take over his post on our panel of experts.

Mr. Scott has kindly consented to do so and sends us a bit of personal background by way of introduction to the readers of *Adventure*. All we can say is, he's packed a lot of excitement into 33 years—having "hunted Egyptian quail in the Nile Valley, big game in West Africa and the Gold Coast, beat the moors of Scotland, and lugged a shotgun all over the U.S.A. from the pheasant country of the Finger Lakes region to the quail cover of Georgia." Mr. Scott has also found time to author three novels—as well as articles for *Cosmopolitan*,

Saturday Evening Post, Pageant, Coronet, This Week and other publications. You'll find his address in the Ask Adventure Experts listing on page 115.

And so, in the name of all the dog lovers who read these pages, we want to thank Freeman Lloyd for his valued contributions to the magazine in the past—and bid Jack Scott a hearty welcome to the roster.

REPORT to Readers Dept.—In the last two issues we have made a general request for comments on what you do and don't like in the magazine. Now we're going to be a bit more specific. How do you like the present series of covers? The settings of the stories printed here are so varied and colorful that we felt a series of *character*-covers to suggest this theme of adventurers-round-the-world was an exciting idea. For example, in December we had an Egyptian (you might have thought, as we did at first, that he was a Turk—but not with that fez, the artist informed us, since Mustapha Kemal banned the wearing of this snappy headgear some years back); in January we ran the picture of the Greek soldier—*evzones,* we believe they're called. They wear skirts, like the famed Scottish "Ladies from Hell," but we imagine the Red guerillas in Greece will attest to their toughness as fighting men. In February, the cover depicted a very lucky adventurer—a South Seas pearler who had come up with a pearl big enough to use as a paperweight. And of course this month we're back in the U.S.A. with the fighting lumberjack. The next character to be featured is a Chinese mandarin—a sinister devil indeed, as you'll agree when you see him! Any suggestions for future covers? If so, we'll pass them along to the artists who paint them.

Incidentally, some of the older readers may notice that we have made a very slight change in the design of the name *Adventure* on the cover—modernized it a bit and made it somewhat more legible. And we've gone back to the single contents page—for a reason. It gives us an extra spread of story-space inside the magazine. Next month we want to talk about the *kind* of stories you like best.—K.W.G.

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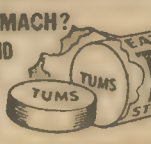

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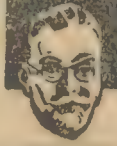

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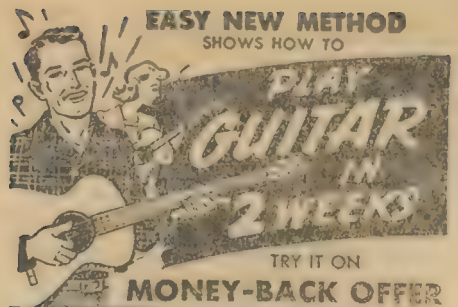

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(Continued from page 91)

struggling to lower the lifeboats. A chunk of deck plate hissed into the water near us.

Again the U-boat fired and the *Starling's* forward cargo boom crashed into the sea. Two more shells struck her amidships and another fire started. We knew it was only a matter of seconds before the holds were hit.

And then they opened up on us with a machine-gun. The first burst spattered the water a few feet to starboard, moved quickly toward us. Someone yelled "Jump!"—and as one man we rose and flung ourselves over the port side. I remember as I went under feeling surprise at the coldness of the water compared to the air and the warm sunshine above. When I came up it was only for a breath. There wasn't time for anything else. Bullets were spattering the water all around.

Twice more I came up, gulped in air and dove back under again. My lungs were bursting. It couldn't go on. If we weren't hit by bullets we would drown certainly. The Germans weren't giving us a chance.

Then the third time I came to the surface the sea was calm; the air perfectly still. I looked around. Heads were bobbing up around me and automatically I counted them. Two were missing. I looked toward the U-boat and for just a second thought I had taken leave of my senses. She was standing on her nose, with her stern out of the water on a 45-degree angle, and there were men clinging to her sides, spreadeagled against the grayness of her hull. She was sinking. There could be no doubt about it. Black smoke was streaming from the conning-tower and from her hatch forward.

For a moment she hung motionless, her propellers high in the air. Then she went under, sliding beneath the waves and we heard the whoosh of air escaping, saw the bubbles bursting on the surface, and the oil slick spreading. After that the sea was calm. Incredibly empty.

We started swimming for the *Starling*, those of us who were still alive. We were stunned. I don't think all of us fully realized what had happened until we climbed to the *Starling's* deck. There the mate met us. He'd chosen to stay and

fight the fires amidships. He was calm, even as he gave orders for combatting the flames.

"Now you know the sort of man you had for a skipper—" his voice was scornful— "don't you?"

He was addressing us but his gaze was on Joe Mayer. Joe was standing by the ladder we'd used for climbing on board and as the mate spoke he seemed to age right before our eyes. We shuffled our feet and looked at each other silently. We knew now what had been in that little black bag, why the mate had protected the skipper from Joe. We had enough explosives in our holds to blow all—not just one—of Hitler's submarines to hell.

We pulled five survivors of the U-boat from the water. They were half-drowned and sullen but we made out from the few words we could pry from them that their commanding officer had been ill with appendicitis.

It took thirty minutes to bring the *Starling's* fires under control. For a while it was close, but we made it.

Later when I returned to the forward well-deck I found Joe Mayer still standing by the ladder. I've seen strong men go to pieces from sheer physical exhaustion. Nervous exhaustion can do the same thing. Joe's face was bloodless and his teeth were chattering. I put my hand on his shoulder. I felt sorry for him. He was just a green kid. I felt a little guilty too. It wasn't so long ago that we'd all of us shared his suspicions.

We stood for a minute that way, breathing the smoke from our fires, catching an occasional whiff of fresh salt air and feeling thankful that we were still alive, that our cargo was safe. I heard Olaf coughing somewhere, then from an engine-room ventilator I was aware of hammering and I remembered McNair and his black gang. Not for sleep, nor food, nor during battle had they stopped in their work of repairing our engines.

But now there was a quickened tempo about that hammering. It was a comforting sound. It was what we had been waiting to hear. It meant that pretty soon we'd be underway again, heading back for Bermuda and another convoy.

THE END

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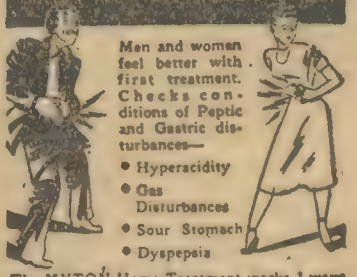

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(Continued from page 83)

That poor dog was really a mess; he'd gotten into nearly everything there was in the woods. That red coat was all streaked and snarled, had more holes in it than one of the Judge's birds; and he was so full of burrs around his legs that he looked almost as if he was wearing hobbles.

It was his eyes that really got me, though. They were all deep-liquid and appealing, and he kept jerking his head back to look at Talbot, as though he expected to get a boot in the quarters. I got an idea what some of that yelping might have been about then. The Judge must have known it all along, and I guess he wasn't feeling as good in there as I'd thought. I knew that right then, because he was down on his knees there with the Irish and that long tongue was licking the side of his head.

And Talbot didn't say a word. He didn't have to; and I didn't ask him how many birds he got either. It was all over his face, where the skin was all white around his eyes and drawn tight like the hide on a snare drum. He stood there for a minute, kind of vibrating inside those fancy boots of his, and then he threw three birds on the ground and stalked away toward his fence-line. His back was stiff like a poker, and he didn't turn around and look at that Irish once. Not once, he didn't.

WELL, sir, we were up there sitting in the orchard again before the Judge said a word about it. I guess he was just too happy about that Irish to speak for a while. He had nearly all the burrs out of that red silk before he opened his mouth.

"Well," he said, "I guess it worked all right at that. I sure hated to think what this Irish was going through though; not only got himself all tore up, but probably got cuffed a couple of times by Talbot. I knew it would happen. Talbot's that kind of man."

"What's that got to do with it?" I asked. I'm a great one to interrupt, especially when I can't see exactly what's going on.

But the Judge didn't pay any atten-

tion to me. He just went on to explain things matter of fact like, the way he had 'em figured out.

"Talbot's right about this dog," he said. "He's a great hunter all right; no doubt the best around here. Only thing, during the time he had him he only used him for field work; never took him in the woods at all. I knew that when I saw his coat the first time. Talbot wouldn't take a chance on taking him in there while he was using him for show too. Might mark him up. He only did it this time because he saw an easy chance to get that land of mine."

The Judge paused to pick a small burr out of the Irish's tail.

"That means that the dog wasn't in the woods for partridge since last season, if then; and not being much more than a pup at the time he probably didn't learn much. Like as not he just ran wild like he did today.

"Of course Talbot never thought of that. He paid eighteen hundred dollars for a champion and he figured that dog ought to be a champion in every respect. It just never occurred to him that those things don't come ready-made. He isn't that kind of a man. He's a perfectionist, you know, and he's got to have it right off. Out in the woods there when he found out he didn't have quite what he thought he'd paid for he got sore and took it out on the dog. That ended everything right there. He was lucky to get as many birds as he did."

So that's how that ended. It took me about a week to get all straightened out again and to get to sleeping normal the way I used to. After a bit, though, everything was serene.

Lately, though, I haven't been so sure. The Judge has taken to sitting up there in the orchard with the glasses again; he and the Irish. And this time he's been aiming them at that Talbot horse track. After he's been up there a bit he's been going down to the barn and giving extra sugar lumps to that old draught nag I use for plowing.

I know it's a silly thing, because he's never cared much for horses, but somehow I can feel something or other in the wind again.

THE END

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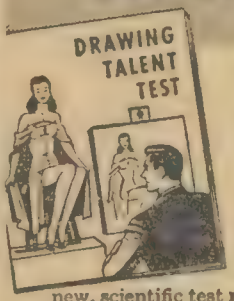

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Beauty Hints No. 104

TENDER HANDS INVITE CARESSES

In olden times, just as today, beautiful hands were always a ready passport to Love and Happiness. In those far-off times, the ladies underwent many weird and wonderful performances in order to obtain soft, delicate-looking hands, such as tying their hands to the bedpost all night, binding the arms tightly to stop the circulation and other such foolish practices. Now-a-days it is not necessary to undergo such drastic treatment—all you need do is to massage the hands with any good brand of cold cream or tissue cream thoroughly each night upon retiring, then cover with chamois or chamoisette gloves, leaving them on all night. In the morning wash off with warm—not hot—water. If necessary the hands can be safeguarded during the day with any of the standard protective lotions. After two weeks the results will astonish you.

BLACKHEADS and SALLOW SKIN

Don't pinch or squeeze your blackheads. It may cause a permanent scar. Just get two ounces of peroxine powder from your Druggist, apply with a hot, wet face-cloth in the manner of a pack. Leave on for a few moments, then wash off with clear water—your blackheads will have dissolved.

(Continued from page 57)

That was all he said, still pretending that he had missed his shot.

From the *Nicholson* Captain Sager jeered, "Better learn how to aim! My cook can do better!"

Going to the bridge, Captain Lorro did not bother to answer him. He chuckled as he listened to the loud jokes of his own crew. He felt good—sensing a stronger bond between his men and himself, and all because this once he had acted by heart and not by head. He had tossed his practicality to the wind. He had acted the way his men expected him to act. He had let a clown of a whistling whale go free.

He thought of the playful flips the humpback had done, the crazy circles it had run them in, and its freak whistling. Leaning on the rail, the skipper watched the men on deck working and talking about the whale, and the most was naturally said by the happy Joseph.

The mate Morse turned to ask, "What do you think made him whistle, Captain?"

The skipper raised one brow, shrugged. "We'll never know."

In that instant he glimpsed a short harpoon cord thrown overboard, and, like a cork popping out of a bottle, the skipper's practical and frugal trait jumped awake and he shook his fist at the men who were working around the gun.

"You wasteful fools!" he bellowed. "Learn once and for all that you'll not get away with that on this ship! D'you think cord's found like seaweed or shrimp? If I catch you again—" He ranted on and on. . .

The mate turned away to smile.

The men on the gun platform stood and took the scorching words, but they harbored no resentment against the skipper.

And standing by the winch where Captain Lorro could not see him, Joseph suppressed his own laughter as he imitated the angry actions of the skipper by shaking a fist at the crew. The Practical Captain—who had just wasted a shot to let the whistling whale escape!

Joseph began to laugh, softly. . .

THE END

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